THE KINKS AT 60 "EXCITEMENT! FEAR! MENACE!"

MOJO

The Music Magazine

ALADDIN SANE
AT 50

148 REVIEWS
LANA DEL REY, PRETTY THINGS, IAN HUNTER
ROBERT JOHNSON
& MORE

ZIGGY IS DEAD, LONG LIVE…

DAVID BOWIE

"WHAT THE HELL JUST HAPPENED?"

PLUS
WILCO
FEIST
THE VOIDOIDS
A CERTAIN RATIO
TRUGOY THE DOVE

U2
CLOSER TO THE EDGE

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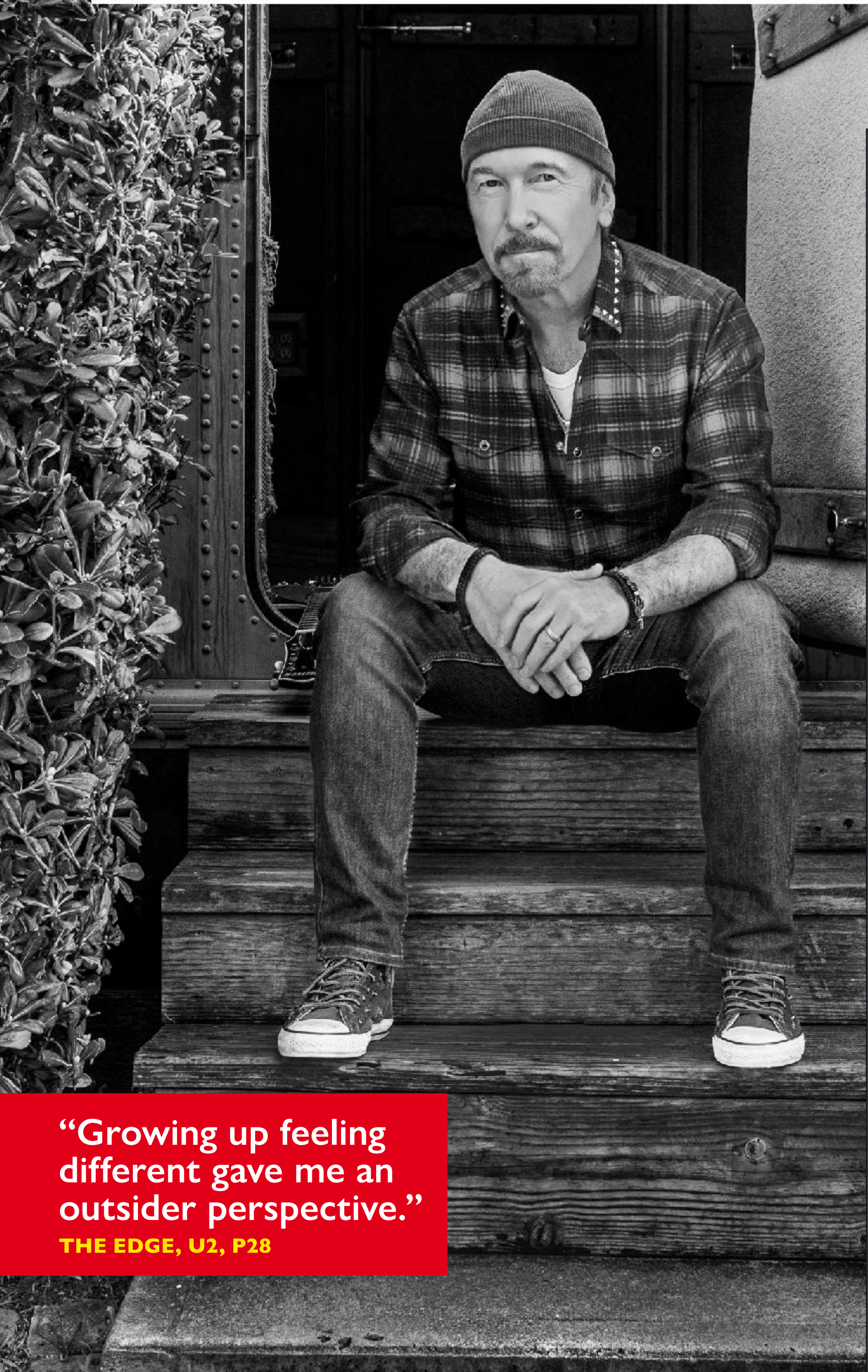
MAY 2023

ISSUE 354



Roger Kisby

> “Growing up feeling different gave me an outsider perspective.”
>
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58 BURT BACHARACH An in-depth tribute to the songwriter’s songwriter, with the help of Jimmy Webb, Barry Gibb, Elvis Costello and more. “What he did was alchemy.”

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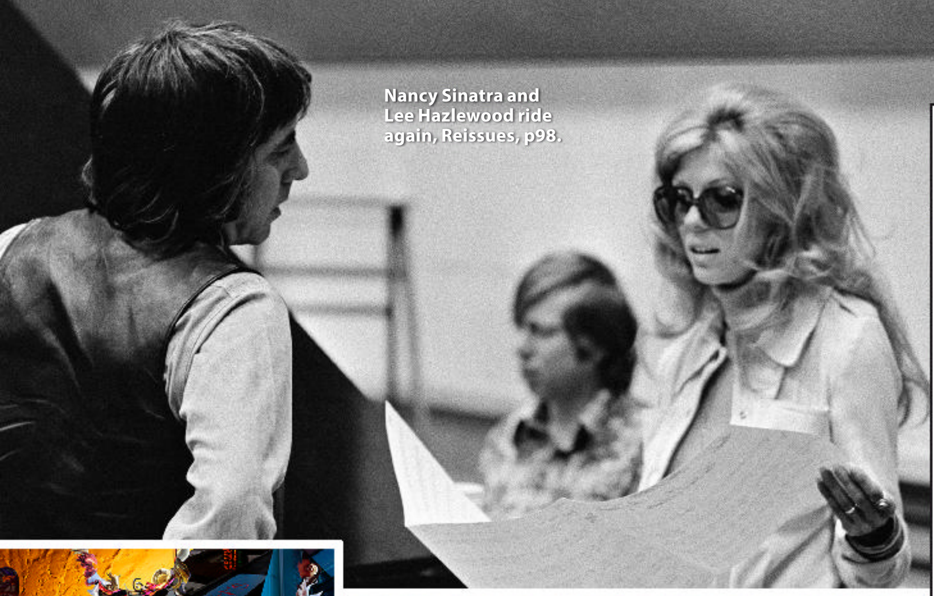
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MOJO

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120 ASK MOJO Just who invented the stage invasion?

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14 JOHN LYDON The wistful Hawaii – his tribute to his wife Nora – may not have been selected as Ireland's Eurovision entry, but PiL's leader is forging on with a new LP and hard-won wisdom. "If I don't get my musical breaks, I'll go insane," he says.

16 DOLLY COLLINS Best known for her arrangements for folk sister Shirley, now her Missa Humana mass has been resurrected. MOJO reports from its premiere.

18 YUSUF/CAT STEVENS He's back with his seventeenth LP, but what have George Harrison, Wendy Carlos and Tin Pan Alley got to do with it?

21 RECORD STORE DAY Discover the pick of the best rebooted vinyl treats available near you this April 22.

22 THE BLUE AEROPLANES They mixed beat poetry and art-rock, and stood on the brink of fame in the '90s. Find out why the Bristol Cult Heroes aren't done yet.

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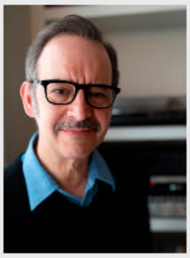
THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE...

Lucy O'Brien

Lucy has been a music writer since the late 1980s, documenting the story of women in popular music with her book She Bop (now in its fourth edition), and most recently publishing Lead Sister, a biography reframing the life and legacy of Karen Carpenter. She talks to Everything But The Girl on page 84.



Bill DeMain

This month, the longtime MOJO contributor met Big Star legend Jody Stephens in Memphis (p42), and revisited 30 years of his interviews with Burt Bacharach (p58) to pay tribute, along with Jimmy Webb and Barry Gibb, to the late great songwriter. Bill lives in Nashville, where he runs the Walkin' Nashville music tour.

Justin De Villeneuve

This month's MOJO cover photographer Justin shot the sleeve of Bowie's *Pin Ups* – an image initially intended for Vogue. Justin was also *Pin Ups* cover co-star Twiggy's manager. Many of his portraits hang at the Iconic Images gallery in Piccadilly, and can be bought at iconicimages.net.

Walter Newton, Ron Joy, Mary Rozzi

CARGO COLLECTIVE

JOSEPHINE FOSTER

DOMESTIC SPHERE

FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

“Psychedelic folk music...connecting to the spirit world” NPR. Recorded with Daniel Blumberg, it bears the stamp of Josephine’s oneiric singing, her voice cloaked forming abstract or instrumental sounds that’s accompanied by a series of field recordings.

CINDY

WHY NOT NOW

TOUGH LOVE LP / CD

Cindy’s fourth LP sees the project evolve into a collective, consisting of multiple contributions from various Bay Area musicians, where at its core remains the introverted & gently profound insights of its leader, Karina Gill.

LAURA LORIGA

VEVER

GOD UNKNOWN RECORDS LP

Mesmerising organ led compositions featuring Josh Werner (Marc Ribot, Coco Rosie), Otto Hauser (Espers, Vashti Bunyan), Anni Rossi and Janis Brenner (Meredith Monk & Vocal Ensemble).

THEE HEADCOATS
IRREGULARIS
The Great Hiatus!

THEE HEADCOATS

IRREGULARIS (THE GREAT HIATUS)

DAMAGED GOODS LP / CD

The undisputed kings of garage rock are back! After 22 long years Billy, Bruce and Johnny return with a brand-new studio album! It’s everything you’d want from a Headcoats record!

DEVON CHURCH
STRANGE STRANGERS

DEVON CHURCH

STRANGE STRANGERS

FELTE LP

Devon Church (formerly of Exitmusic) returns with tape-saturated atmosphere, combo organs, widescreen guitars & vocals that shade towards Lee Hazelwood & Leonard Cohen, featuring wry lyrics & a striking vocal counterpoint with his partner, Ada Roth.

DJ BLACK LOW
IMPUMELELO

DJ BLACK LOW

IMPUMELELO

AWESOME TAPES FROM AFRICA 2LP

DJ Black Low shook the fast-developing world of South African amapiano with his debut’s angular gymnastics. Back with an array of vocalists and co-producers, a follow up of singular heft and sonic diversity.

TAPE RUNS OUT
floodhead

TAPE RUNS OUT

FLOODHEAD

TRAPPED ANIMAL LP

A magical, shoe-gazey album full of snappy alt-pop songs and prog soundscapes. “confident enough to carry you along....you can really tell how much work they’ve put in” Steve Lamacq 6Music.

DEATHCRASH

LESS

UNTITLED (RECS) LP / CD

London slowcore bastions’ new record was recorded in the Outer Hebrides over two weeks. Spacious, loud, powerful, refined and tender, it’s less and more simultaneously. FFO: Duster, Codeine, Pretend, Mogwai.

EXIT NORTH
ANYWAY, STILL

EXIT NORTH

ANYWAY, STILL

EXIT NORTH RECORDS 2LP / CD

Exit North present their 2nd album ‘Anyway, Still’. Provocative song structures weave through orchestral arrangements, acoustic atmospheres, animated rhythms & driving distortions. Featuring JAPAN co-founder Steve Jansen with Swedish singer Thomas Feiner.

DEERHOOF

MIRACLE-LEVEL

JOYFUL NOISE RECORDINGS LP / CD

After 28 years, Deerhoof is finally lured into the recording studio. Miracle-Level is an avant-garde anti-fascist carnival about the infinite small wonders of existence, sung entirely in Japanese.

HEATHER WOODS BRODERICK

LABYRINTH

WESTERN VINYL LP / CD

With songs that range from intimate piano ballads to electro-pop anthems, Labyrinth is a stunning meditation on movement and Heather’s most confident album yet. MOJO calls her work “exquisitely beautiful.”

JANA HORN

THE WINDOW IS THE DREAM

NO QUARTER LP / CD

A Rothko-esque color field set to music, The Window Is The Dream ventures even deeper into Jana Horn’s inner space than her stark, acclaimed debut Optimism.

The New Pornographers
Continue as a Guest

THE NEW PORNOGRAPHERS

CONTINUE AS A GUEST

MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

A.C. Newman, Neko Case & co. have made more than their fair share of power pop classics over the years… Why the hell would they stop now?!

WILLIAM TYLER & THE IMPOSSIBLE TRUTH
SECRET STRATOSPHERE

WILLIAM TYLER & THE IMPOSSIBLE TRUTH

SECRET STRATOSPHERE

MERGE RECORDS LP

William Tyler and his electric back-up band The Impossible Truth refashion prime cuts from the Nashville guitarist’s rich catalog.

RESTAURANT ASIATIQUE
ROYAL TARBES
65
LFT

LA FÉLINE

TARBES

KWAIDAN RECORDS LP / CD

“After making a name for herself, La Féline has evolved once again. The 13 songs of Tarbes reinvent the circle of life & challenge our preconceived notions. She welcomes us to her hometown with sweet & clear melodies over the backdrop of an electronic hum.

CREDIT ELECTRIC

OUT OF LOVE IN THE FACE OF A SHADOW

ROYAL OAKIE CD

The new album from Credit Electric explores the human unconscious through impressionistic pop vignettes, with their hazy American folk songs drawing upon dub, post-rock, lo-fi jazz, and ambient music.

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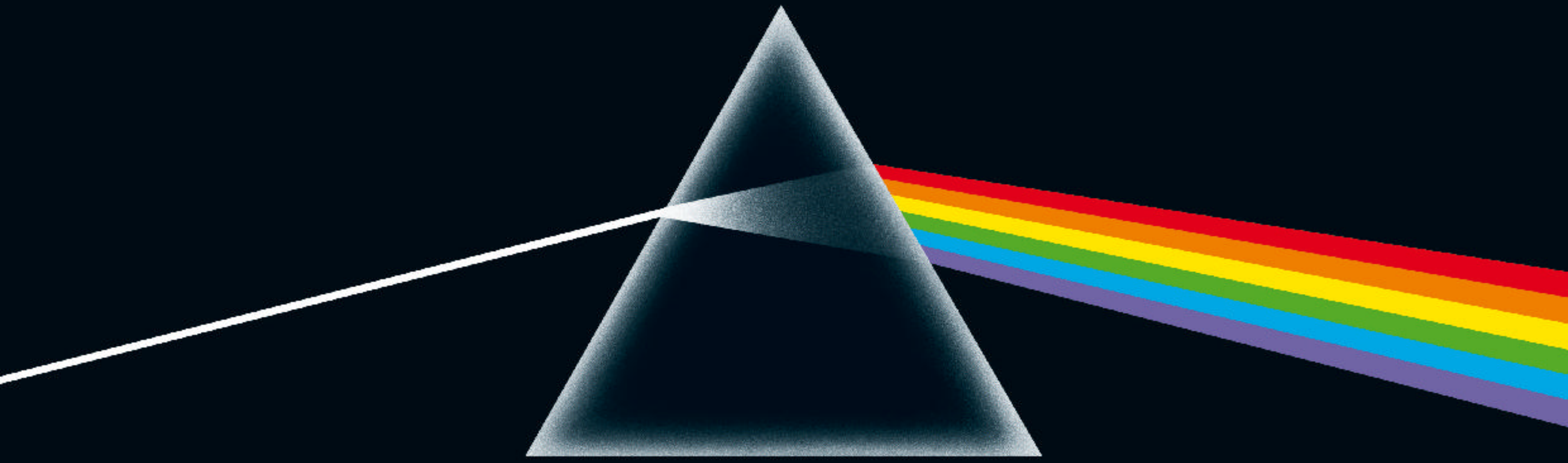
PINK FLOYD
THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON



50 YEARS IN A HEARTBEAT

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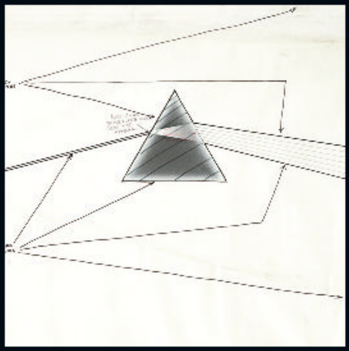
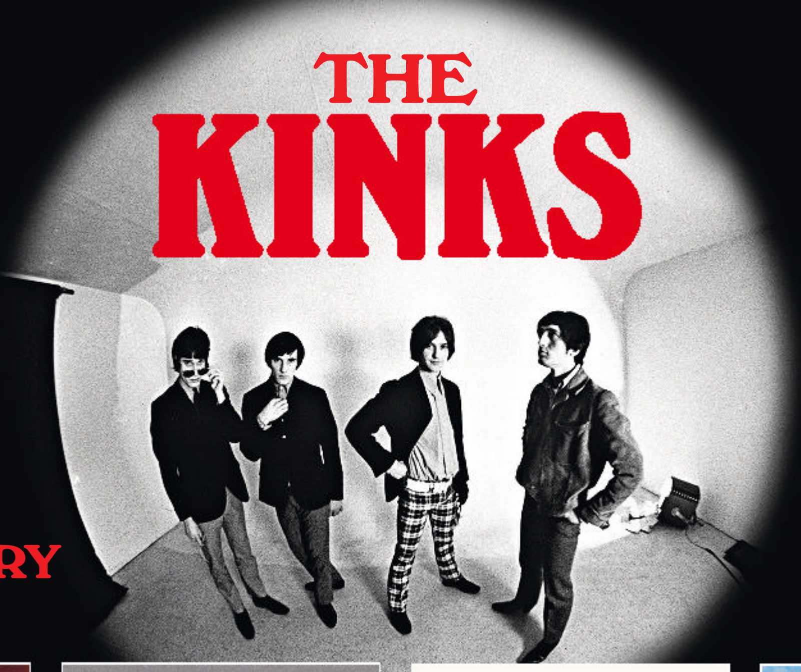


PINK FLOYD

50

THE DARK SIDE
OF THE MOON

THE KINKS



A 60TH ANNIVERSARY SAMPLER

KOMPILED BY RAY DAVIES, DAVE DAVIES & MICK AVORY

1 I'M A LOVER NOT A FIGHTER
From *Kinks*

The Kinks' 1964 debut album might have featured instant classic Ray Davies songs like You Really Got Me and Stop Your Sobbing, but nine of the 14 tracks were actually cover versions. Dave Davies takes raspy lead on this version of a J.D. Miller tune first recorded by Louisiana bluesman Lazy Lester in 1958. Spot the illustrious session man on 12-string acoustic: Jimmy Page!

Written by Jay Miller. Published by Campbell Connelly & Co. Ltd. ℗1964 Sanctuary Records Group Ltd., a BMG company. From *Kinks*

kinda kinks

2 SOMETHING BETTER BEGINNING
From *Kinda Kinks*

"Is this the start of another heartbreaker?" The last track on The Kinks' second LP, Something Better Beginning was actually recorded at the back end of 1964, soon after the completion of their debut. A last-dance crooner, Ray's song harks back to a pre-rock era, but his emotional intelligence is rapidly moving forward, as he captures the uncertainties of a new relationship.

Written by Ray Davies. Published by Edward Kassner Music Co. Ltd. ℗1965 Sanctuary Records Group Ltd., a BMG company. From *Kinda Kinks*

THE KINK KONTROVERSY

3 THE WORLD KEEPS GOING ROUND
From *The Kink Kontroversy*

"The Kinks have remained at the very top of pop record popularity, while others have faded and died," wrote Michael Aldred in his sleevenotes to *The Kink Kontroversy*, marvelling at a recording career which was almost two whole years old. Real longevity would come in good time, thanks to woozy beauties like this, with its chiming intimations of psychedelia.

Written by Ray Davies. Published by Carlin Music Corp. ℗1965 Sanctuary Records Group Ltd., a BMG company. From *The Kink Kontroversy*

FACE TO FACE
KINKS

4 PARTY LINE
From *Face To Face*

Another Dave Davies lead vocal on this garage ramalam, the opening track to 1966's *Face To Face*. The concept of a shared telephone line, and the intrigues of eavesdropping on other conversations, provides exquisite Kinks social comedy. Note the little Englander indignation of threatening "I'm not voting in the next election" unless the line is fixed. The voice at the start is Kinks co-manager Grenville Collins.

Written by Ray Davies. Published by Carlin Music Corp. ℗1966 Sanctuary Records Group Ltd., a BMG company. From *Face To Face*

6 STARSTRUCK
From *The Kinks Are The Village Green Preservation Society*

If much of *The Kinks Are The Village Green…* focused on the consolations of rural English life, Starstruck provides a jaunty critique of more urban temptations. "You're a victim of bright city lights," Ray counsels, a sage escapee from Swinging London, but one who still knows the value of a new-fangled mellotron.

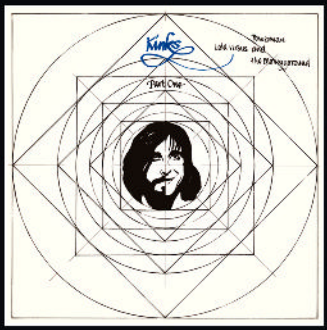
Written by Ray Davies. Published by Carlin Music Corp. ℗2018 Sanctuary Records Group Ltd., a BMG company. From *The Kinks Are The Village Green Preservation Society*

KINKS
ARTHUR

7 BRAINWASHED
From *Arthur Or The Decline And Fall Of The British Empire*

The flipside of *Village Green*'s idylls, 1969's *Arthur* was inspired by the Davies's brother-in-law Arthur Anning. A complex study of post-war suburban life, it includes this punchy, horn-enriched indictment of a system gamed against the "brainwashed" ordinary man: "The aristocrats and bureaucrats/Are dirty rats," sings Ray, "for making you what you are."

Written by Ray Davies. Published by Carlin Music Corp. ℗2019 Sanctuary Records Group Ltd., a BMG company. From *Arthur Or The Decline And Fall Of The British Empire*



8 POWERMAN
From *Lola Versus Powerman And The Moneygoround, Pt. 1*

Perhaps inevitably, Ray's withering gaze would have to be concentrated on the music business sooner or later. The elaborate takedown came in 1970, with *Lola Versus Powerman…* and this pulsating track detailing the iniquities of a label boss who's "got my money and my publishing rights". Ray and Dave share lead vocals, brilliantly matched in outrage.

Written by Ray Davies. Published by Carlin Music Corp. ℗2020 Sanctuary Records Group Ltd., a BMG company. From *Lola Versus Powerman And The Moneygoround, Pt. 1*

BMG
THE KINKS
MUSWELL HILLBILLIES

9 HERE COME THE PEOPLE IN GREY
From *Muswell Hillbillies*

1971's *Muswell Hillbillies* saw the Kinks' musical horizons expand, embracing a sinewy, rootsy kind of Americana akin to that of The Band. Ray had not, however, abandoned his duties as chronicler of the challenges faced by the British lower classes. Hence Here Come The People In Grey, almost certainly rock's finest song about compulsory purchase orders.

Written by Ray Davies. Published by Davray Music Ltd & BMG Rights Management (UK) Ltd. ℗2022 Kinks Properties Limited under exclusive license to Sanctuary Records Group Ltd., a BMG company. From *Muswell Hillbillies*

Dezo Hoffman/Shutterstock, David Magnus/Shutterstock

AT SOME POINT IN 1963, THE BAND THAT HAD BEEN BRIEFLY known as The Ravens, The Ramrods, The Bo-Weevils, The Pete Quaife Band and The Ray Davies Quartet finally found a name they could stick with: The Kinks. Sixty years on, The Kinks' incendiary, poignant, witty subversion of British rock has lost none of its charm and bite, and the depth of their catalogue continues to amaze.

To commemorate that auspicious 60th anniversary, Ray Davies, Dave Davies and Mick Avory have reconvened to put together a two-part compilation entitled *The Journey*. "There's never been an officially sanctioned best-of before," Ray tells us on page 44, as he and his bandmates walk MOJO through the stories behind You Really Got Me, Waterloo Sunset, Days and more.

Two collections, however, still can't contain anything like all the riches The Kinks have to offer. So we're thrilled that Ray, Dave and Mick have also compiled this *60th Anniversary Sampler* especially for MOJO: 10 lesser-known but equally extraordinary songs harvested from the tracklistings of their first 15 studio albums. Thank you to The Kinks, and to BMG, for this remarkable MOJO CD. As Ray puts it so pointedly on Track 10, "Everybody needs an education…"

the Kinks 60
MOJO
THE KINKS
A 60TH ANNIVERSARY SAMPLER
KOMPILED BY RAY DAVIES, DAVE DAVIES & MICK AVORY

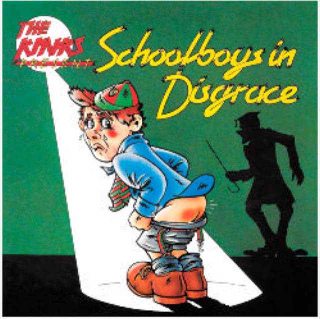
Something Else by The Kinks

5 LOVE ME TILL THE SUN SHINES

From *Something Else By The Kinks*

Written by Dave Davies as well as sung by him, Love Me Till The Sun Shines first surfaced as the flipside of his 1967 solo debut, Death Of A Clown, before finding a home on *Something Else* a month later. A throbbing new heaviness is evident, not unlike the direction in which key Kinks contemporaries The Who were heading simultaneously.

Written by Dave Davies. Published by Carlin Music Corp. ℗1967 Sanctuary Records Group Ltd., a BMG company. From *Something Else By The Kinks*

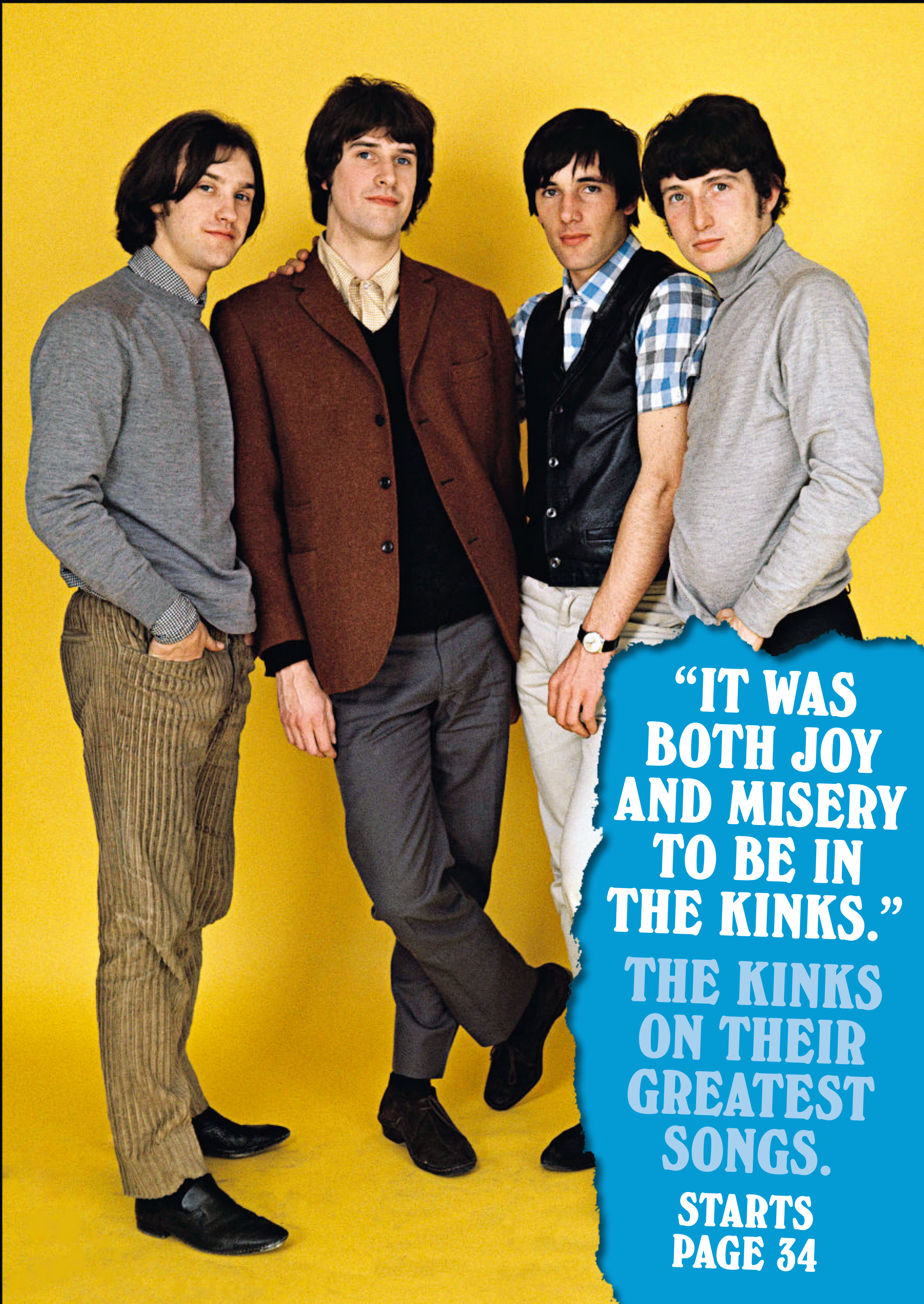


10 EDUCATION

From *Schoolboys In Disgrace*

From 1975's *Schoolboys In Disgrace*, Education amps up The Kinks' theatrical impulses and stadium rock chops, but their and Ray's core values remain intact, as they have done through 60 often tempestuous years: characterful, satirical music, rooted in British life and empathetic to ordinary people, that has proved uncannily relevant to changing times.

Written by Ray Davies. Published by Davray Music Ltd & BMG Rights Management (UK) Ltd. ℗1975 Kinks Properties Limited under exclusive license to Sanctuary Records Group Ltd., a BMG Company. From *Schoolboys In Disgrace*



"IT WAS BOTH JOY AND MISERY TO BE IN THE KINKS."

THE KINKS ON THEIR GREATEST SONGS.

STARTS PAGE 34

RUEN BROTHERS

TEN PACES

RUEN BROTHERS
TEN PACES

AVAILABLE JUNE 2

“There’s nobody else like these guys making classic, timeless, unique music at this level.”
—Rick Rubin

DADDY LONG LEGS

STREET SERMONS

“...the coolest, most authentically groovy band you’ve never heard of.”
– No Depression

Produced by **Oakley Munson** (Black Lips) and features **Wreckless Eric** and **John Sebastian** (The Lovin’ Spoonful)

DADDY LONG LEGS
STREET SERMONS

Yep Roc Records

Darlene Love

SHE'S A REBEL

What music are you currently grooving to?

Earth, Wind & Fire, doesn't matter which one. Also, music that keeps me calm, what we call meditation music, and I love Adele, she's gorgeous.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Well, my music that I listened to was mostly on 45. But one song that I can listen to, if it's 20 years from now or the next minute, is **Sam Cooke**'s You Send Me. I was acquainted with him when he was singing gospel music, but when he started singing secular music, he brought that same spirit.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Sings, "Darling, you send me..." That was the first! From Sam's record store on Central Avenue in Los Angeles, in a predominantly black neighbourhood, where we hung out.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Barbra Streisand. I saw her one time in Central Park and I never saw anything like it in my life, how she acted and how she portrayed herself, how she performed.

What do you sing in the shower?

I don't, I *hum* in the shower, melodies from my head. It's good for warming the throat up.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Lionel Richie, *Can't Slow Down*. One of the very few albums where I liked every song. I still have two copies!

And your Sunday morning record?

I'm getting ready to go to church. The gospel group of **Richard Smallwood**, they are the greatest. He is *un-believable*. I also listen to **Elvis Presley**'s gospel albums, they're all songs that we love to sing, the hymns of the church. It wakes up the spirit.

Darlene Love's Live 1982 is available on DVD, CD and digital debut via Liberation Hall on April 7.

ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING...

John Otway & Wild Willy Barrett

STILL REALLY FREE

What music are you currently grooving to?

John Otway: Sound Of The Sirens. Their song All That I Could Find is my favourite track of the last decade.
Wild Willy Barrett: Some material Otway passed to me, to try to make it sound groovy.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

JO: Van Morrison, *Astral Weeks* or **Bob Dylan**, *Blood On The Tracks*. I need more shoving and pushing to choose.
WWB: Definitely not Otway's *All Balls & No Willy* LP. I don't mind the title, it's just the music.

Ebru Yildiz, Lorna Wilson, Courtesy DarleneLoveWorld

What's the first record you ever bought? And where from?

JO: Rhythm Of The Rain by **The Cascades** from the Record Centre in Aylesbury in 1963.
WWB: I've stolen records, borrowed them and never given them back, but bought – never!

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

JO: Any good instrumentalist. Don't know if I'd want to be Willy though.
WWB: Wasn't there a guy who banged a tin tray on his head and sang Mule Train? **Bob Blackman**, he'll do.

What do you sing in the shower?

JO: Whatever I'm trying to write. My songs always sound better there and sadly never as good in the studio, no matter how much reverb is added.
WWB: I was discouraged from doing this from an early age, and I've always taken a dim view of those that take the habit into adulthood.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

JO: Saturday April 2, 2022, Shepherd's Bush Empire. My 5,000th gig – and that was a world record.
WWB: That was such a good record I actually turned up myself.

And your Sunday morning record?

JO: Of all the versions of Sunday Morning, I'll have to go with **Nico**'s.
WWB: The Sound Of Silence.

The 50 Years Of Otway & Barrett tour opens in Trowbridge on 16 April and runs through to September.

Jana Horn

TEXAS IN HER SOUL

What music are you currently grooving to?

I've been listening to the radio, whatever's on. Sometimes it's full-on musical theatre hour. I don't mind. I like not knowing what I'll get, what's on next.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

I don't think I'll ever tire of *Solo Piano*, by **Chilly Gonzales**. There's something essential about it that's hard to name… it's like he's playing *with* the piano more than playing it.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

The first record I can remember buying was **Nick Cave And the Bad Seeds**, by accident. It was at a Half Price Books. It had a cover with flowers on it [*No More Shall We Part*, 2001], so I thought it might sound like that.

> "Chilly Gonzales sounds like he's playing *with* the piano, more than playing it."
> **JANA HORN**

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Maybe **Maggie Roche**, with sisters to sing with. Or someone who can really play their instrument, like Chilly, or **Caetano Veloso** on classical guitar.

What do you sing in the shower?

I wouldn't call it singing per se… but I will talk out loud to myself. Or just say, Oh my gosh, every so often.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

I love this album by a three-woman group named **Travesía**, *Ni Un Minuto Más De Dolor*. Akin to The Roches, but perhaps more difficult and curious. Killer. 1983, Uruguay.

And your Sunday morning record?

The Jimmy Giuffre Clarinet by **Jimmy Giuffre**.

The Window Is The Dream is out on April 7 via No Quarter.

MOJO

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IMAGINE TRYING TO KEEP UP WITH David Bowie in 1973. We're chronically aware of the demands on our time in 2023, but consider Bowie's schedule for that year, starting with 84 Ziggy Stardust dates in the UK, the USA and Japan. Another classic album, *Aladdin Sane*, written and recorded between shows and released in April. The denouement of the Ziggy era at Hammersmith Odeon in July. Then straight back into the studio to construct *Pin Ups*, in the shops only six months after *Aladdin Sane*. "We moved at such intensity, such speed," Bowie told Melody Maker in May, as if it was all over, as if a few days on the Trans-Siberian Express constituted a major retreat from fame. There were collaborations to pursue, too, a US TV special, and a rock opera that would soon reconfigure itself into *Diamond Dogs*. It all remains dizzying to even contemplate: meticulous, high-concept masterpieces seemingly put together on the fly; nuanced personae that most sane artists would lean into for years, rinsed and disposed of in a matter of months.

Is half a century long enough for everyone involved to get their breath back? This month in MOJO, Tom Doyle reconvenes the musicians, confidants and managers who spent 1973 with Bowie, and tries to take stock of "what the hell happened", 50 years on. "It was pretty manic," Bowie's friend Geoff MacCormack tells us, unsurprisingly. "He was in a hurry. But he had the talent to do it. The output was unbelievable."

JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

But is there anyone who's really good?

Can I say a huge thank you to Mat Snow and everyone involved in creating your wholly outstanding piece on Jeff Beck [MOJO 353]. It was wonderful to be presented with so many examples of Jeff's other-worldly skills as a guitarist, how he inspired and influenced generations of musicians, and overall how he was the guitar heroes' guitar hero. However, what made this piece particularly special was how it gave readers a glimpse into what it must have been like for Jeff outside of the spotlight and media attention. To learn about Jeff's insecurities, and how he would on so many occasions choose to bolt rather than place himself in the vulnerable position of performing alongside artists whom he admired, made for a very poignant read. Ultimately, the article did so much to humanise, though not dilute, the legend that Jeff was and will continue to be.

Craig Isherwood, Poulton-Le-Fylde

Wherever. Take me wherever you want.

Great to see Pete Brown & Piblokto! featured in Buried Treasure [MOJO 353]. In the early '70s, my friends and I were big fans in rock hotspot Billericay, Essex. My schoolmate Keith's elder brother was a roadie for them. Think his name was Alan. We went to Southend-on-Sea to a little club to see them and the four of us were the entire audience. Pete was so grateful we'd turned up he bought us all a pint. Another time at the Marquee, we helped unload their gear. The WEM amps had 'Cream' stencilled on the back.

Allen Manning, via e-mail

A human life is truly as frail and fleeting as the morning dew

I was thrilled to see Depeche Mode on the cover of MOJO 353. With over 40 years creating music and a fifteenth album release, they have been a constant companion to my joys and woes. My most recent woe being the suicide of my dear brother, who struggled with heroin addiction. MOJO's excellent article captured the joys and woes of DM. Dave's words re the loss of Fletch: "I don't know what the fuck you do but it's something. And maybe it's really, really important," had me thinking of a Buddhist monk meditating on the world's woes; is the monk doing fuck-all sitting on his arse all day, or is he emanating crucial peaceful vibes into a chaotic and cruel world? Just like DM's music being both melancholy and inspiring, I find Gore and Gahan inspirational by embracing all that bringing out a new album entails despite the loss of Fletch's really, really important presence. I hope they find as much joy in doing so as they give their fans. I'm sure Fletch will be with them on-stage in spirit.

Lizzy Barmak, London

In the end, you cannot understand the things men do

About bloody time! But also thanks a lot for your splendid Sparklehorse feature [MOJO 352]. I find it quite bewildering to think that the vastly underrated Mark Linkous, AKA Sparklehorse, has been so unfairly overlooked in comparison to other artists of the same period. Radiohead, Dave Gilmour, P.J. Harvey, Tom Waits, Portishead and David Lynch, amongst others, could see the potential of this gifted but ultimately lost maverick who was out of his time in the grunge/Brit-pop era. Four original albums and the posthumous, wonderful concept *Dark Night Of The Soul* collaboration with Danger Mouse and David Lynch only seemed to mystify and confuse a wider audience. For my part, it was a pleasure to have been able to photograph and go to so many shows that Sparklehorse would frequently play on these shores, where they were always warmly received. Like all those people of past generations who now rave about Big Star and other ignored cult acts, your feature may be the start of a deserved new reawakening. Next stop has to be the insatiable and indestructible Guided By Voices story, MOJO. Now that would be impressive!

Tony Bartolo, via e-mail

I buried them all here in the woods and no-one but me knows where

Bob Dylan's Seven Days [MOJO 352] has been committed to tape, by Ronnie Wood on his wonderful *Gimme Some Neck* album. And, if I may add this, Wood's solo albums deserve more attention in MOJO than they have received this far. You wonder why they aren't re-released?

Ludo Wiegerinck, via e-mail

Man just wants to forget the bad stuff

I really appreciated the great piece on Jerry Lee Lewis by Bob Mehr [MOJO 351], but I am puzzled why Jerry Lee's 1977 Middle Age Crazy was not mentioned. This Mercury recording of the Sonny Throckmorton composition features what I believe might be the most nuanced vocal performance The Killer ever laid down on wax. It was a huge country hit in 1977 and was the penultimate Top 5 hit that Lewis had on any chart. I don't believe Lewis ever sounded so vulnerable and world-weary as on this record. It is truly a standout effort.

Stephen Hartwell, Easthampton, Massachusetts

Whose story is believable?

John Bungey's review of *BBC Broadcasts* by Genesis [MOJO 353] has prompted me to write. I am not even a massive Genesis fan, but his comments about the Peter Gabriel era of the band were just old-school anti-prog rock generalisation. The review would have been better employed telling us more about what is on the CD set. That first era of the band produced some great music (eg, *Foxtrot* and *Selling England By The Pound*) and I think a lot of people would strongly disagree when Mr Bungey says, "It's a bit of a relief when Phil Collins cuts the whimsy and starts singing hook-laden pop-rock." Fans may prefer one or other era of the band or like them both, but Mr Bungey's suggestion that the Collins-fronted band became "the Coldplay of the 1980s" probably sums it up accurately.

John Bentley, North Yorkshire

I had never seen such fierceness in a woman

Thrilled to see a big feature on Christine McVie [MOJO 352]. She was a big favourite of mine, and millions of others, of course. But I was disappointed to not see any mention of McVie's fantastic '84 solo disc, *Christine McVie* (produced by Russ Titelman). And, in the list of her best Fleetwood Mac songs, I think the underrated *Heroes Are Hard To Find* LP's Come A Little Bit Closer track was a pretty significant omission.

Marty Lange, Austin

That is why I was crying

There have been so many deaths in the celebrity space lately, it's hard to let go of the feeling of deep loss. But strangely, none have affected me as much as the passing of Low's Mimi Parker. To think I will hear nothing new from that incredible voice… well, it's heartbreaking.

Ken Meyer Jr, Santa Ana

I'm tired of this farce

Another great issue of MOJO [353], packed with great insight and insider recollections as ever – and discovering Billy Nomates is a fellow Stranglers fan. Oh, and the second time I've cracked the cryptic titles on the letters pages. A nod to your cover stars from Basildon, they're all from the epic Dr Strangelove. "Gentlemen, you can't fight in here! This is the War Room." Keep up the good work.

Jon Perks, Worcester

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WHAT GOES ON!

THE HOT NEWS AND BIZARRE STORIES FROM PLANET **MOJO**

This Is A Love Song

John Lydon speaks about Hawaii, caring for his wife Nora, and new **Public Image Ltd** album *End Of World.*

SPEAKING FROM his Californian home, John Lydon is in defiant mood. "With PiL, we're capable of going in any direction. I have no barriers and fears. We do all the emotions and are fully prepared and committed to go deep down into a tragedy as we are committed to going high up to the nth elevation of happiness, if that so be the subject of the song..."

This stance has been tested of late. Released in January, latest single Hawaii was a beauteous and touching love song written as a reaction to his wife Nora's Alzheimer's disease. After Lydon declared that he wanted to sing it while representing Ireland in this year's Eurovision Song Contest, PiL competed on RTE's The Late Late Show on February 3, but lost the vote to hygienic Dublin indie rockers Wild Youth and their song We Are One.

"It was a pleasure just to be invited," says Lydon, immune to sour grapes. "I was slightly off-key but then again so were half the acts! But what a wonderful offer. I mean, no one's offered me anything quite like it my whole life – apart from the MOJO award [in 2008] – and I got what I needed, which was footage to be able to show Nora, and she loved it."

Life, inevitably, has been irrevocably altered by Nora's diagnosis. "It's quite the experience we're going through," he says. "Anything can crop up at any time and you have to be attuned to it. We know that she's going to slowly deteriorate into something catastrophic, and then death. But she will enjoy every step of it, and I'm here to make sure of that because she'd do the same for me. It's not all tear-jerky and sad. A lot of it is very joyful. Nora has always been the greatest example of how to enjoy life, she's very vivacious and very open and very tender, and those things are not going away."

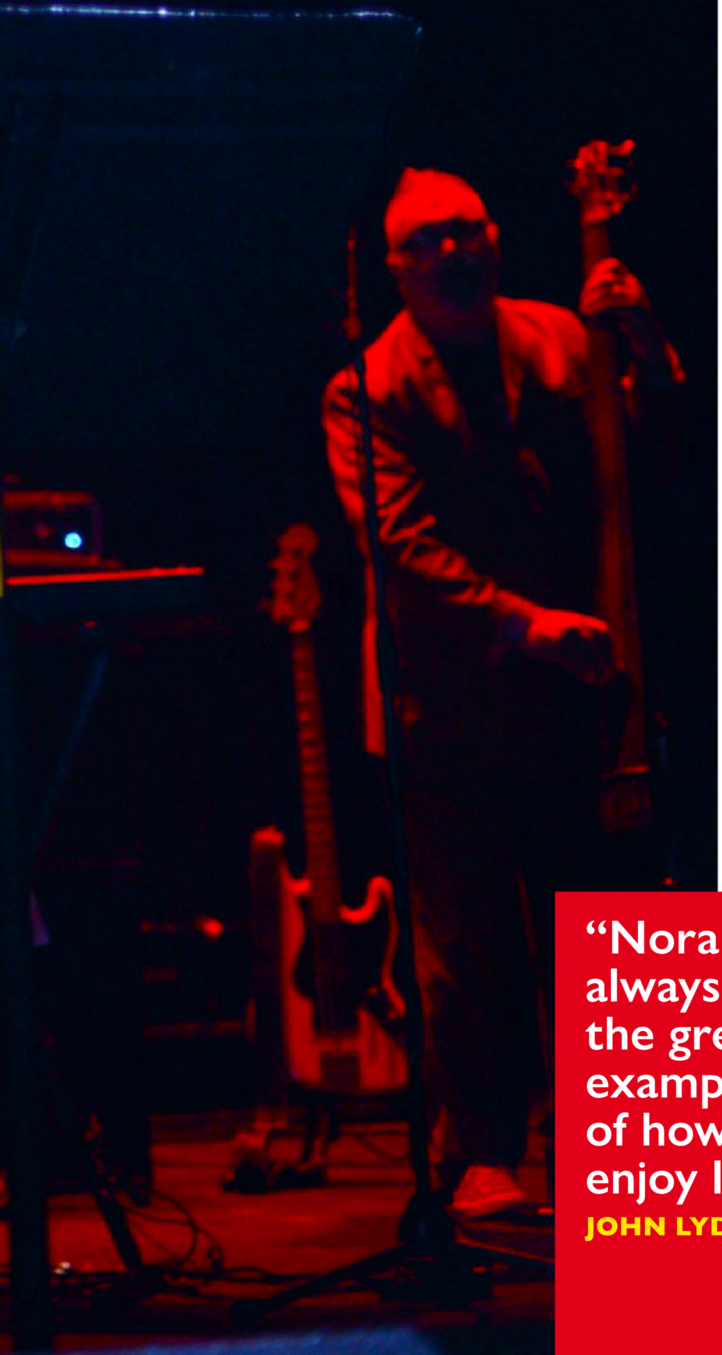
Remarkably, as well as caring for Nora, Lydon and PiL have a new album ready for release later this year. Begun in 2018, derailed by Covid and finished last year, it's entitled *End Of World* (he says he forgot to include 'the' when painting the cover art). Produced by the band with regular foil James Towler, it was recorded in Cheltenham and Alcester. "It's an unusual piece of work," promises Lydon. "I suppose the Covid thing helped because it filled up the energy coffers, we got into a studio and there was just this massive explosion of ideas."

Among its 14 songs are Northwest Passage ("a slice of proper heavy metal"), Penge ("something like a medieval Viking epic") and Dirty Murky Delight, which he likens to the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band. More startling still, he compares The Do That to Tiger Feet by Mud (MOJO is treated to a brief a cappella recital of the former song). "I've got a real brain for pop!" he laughs. "But nothing is done flippantly, everything we do is really embedded in a wholesome truth." And the meaning of the title? "I have no idea. Probably the end of one world, and the beginning of another."

There have been other losses in recent years, namely the passing of PiL guitarist Keith Levene and Lydon's estrangement from his old Sex Pistols bandmates, after they ended up in court over the use of the band's music in Danny Boyle's 2022 Disney mini-series Pistol. Yet today, swami Lydon is unruffled. "I try my best, but you can't always remember those kinds of people fondly," he says. "[But] I don't speak ill of the dead and I hope they're in a better place. And of course, you know, people do hateful things, spiteful things, and jealous things, but you're still gonna love them. Because underneath all that is a crying little kitten, and that's the part I'm fondly attached to. (*Sings*) "And they called it puppy lo-ove..."

He's eager to get PiL back on the road, he says, for his own sake as well as the band's devotees. "If I don't get, like, my musical breaks, I'll go insane," he says. "Nora would be furious if I gave it up. And a wonderful side of all of this is the Alzheimer's societies are making contact, and I can spread whatever it is I'm learning about all of this... let's bring it to the forefront, and find a reason behind getting rid of this thing."

Ian Harrison



On the rise again: Public Image Ltd's John Lydon, with (left) Bruce Smith and Scott Firth, at London's Kentish Town Forum, June 16, 2022; (above) Nora and John enjoying life, 1986; (below) Lydon performs Hawaii on The Late Late Eurosong 2023 Special.

"Nora has always been the greatest example of how to enjoy life."
JOHN LYDON

Mirrorpix, RTÉ Late Show/Andres Poveda, Getty

Mass appeal: (left, from left) Dolly and Shirley Collins in 1966; (right) the National Symphony Orchestra performing Dolly's Missa Humana, February 24, 2023.

REBORN! DOLLY COLLINS' LOST SECULAR MASS MISSA HUMANA

THE FIRST lady of English folk Shirley Collins is understandably wistful when she remembers her older sister and genius musical arranger Dolly, who died in 1995 aged 62. "She always regretted that the only output she had that was heard publicly was her arrangements for my singing," she tells MOJO. "She was a classical musician really and wanted her own work to be heard."

A tiny piece of the universe was fixed on February 24 when Dolly's Missa Humana was performed in public for the first time at London's Conway Hall by the National Symphony Orchestra under the direction of conductor John Andrews. With operatic singing from the Minerva Consort, the 'humanist mass' was Dolly's attempt to reconcile her devoutly secular beliefs with the power of religious classical music. A chorus of "peace at last" was perhaps the defining moment of an assured piece of work which is a substantial leap from the early music-informed arrangements Dolly deployed on the Collins sisters' most celebrated records, *Anthems In Eden* and *Love, Death And The Lady*. Dolly's lugubrious, baroque melodies, though, were instantly familiar.

Raised in Sussex, the sisters' upbringing was defined by music and leftist politics, but while Shirley decided she was more interested in traditional song than The Internationale, Dolly kept her red flag flying, and made regular trips to London to study classical music at the Workers' Music Association under communist composer Alan Bush.

A friend from Sussex days, esteemed poet, novelist and activist Maureen Duffy, enlisted Dolly to write songs for her first play, 1956's Pearson (modern folk stylist Lisa Knapp performed one of them, the Bertolt Brecht-like The Man With The Axe, at Conway Hall). One of Duffy's poems, meanwhile, provided the text for the Missa Humana, which Dolly started writing in the 1960s and did not complete until the 1990s.

Shirley remembers hearing working versions of it for decades, and attempted to help perform it when she had put her career on hold in the '80s. "I tried to sing along from time to time but this was at the point when I had no confidence in my voice, so I couldn't," she remembers.

In the early '90s, Current 93's David Tibet recorded Dolly singing the complete Missa Humana with solo piano accompaniment, but that sketchy version (part of which can be heard on the 2017 documentary The Ballad Of Shirley Collins) has none of the heft of the completed piece performed at the Conway Hall.

To her great sadness, Shirley was not able to attend her sister's posthumous opening night, having spent the days before the concert nursing a suspected fractured hip. "I'm 87 and prone to things happening," she says, ruefully. However, King's College London are archiving the performance, and while there are no immediate plans to release the Missa Humana commercially, Shirley suspects there are plenty more of Dolly's compositions waiting to be discovered.

"She wanted her own work to be heard."
SHIRLEY COLLINS

"I've got a box full of her music going back to when she was a late teenager," she says. "Because I don't read music I don't really know what's in there, but now this has been produced maybe we can find something else."

Whether those pieces remain unperformed, the superb pieces Dolly wrote for Shirley continue to bear testament to a unique command of melody. "Nobody else could have written those arrangements," Shirley says with sisterly pride. "They are so absolutely Dolly."

Jim Wirth

GIMME FIVE... LOOOONG TITLES

The Supremes

A Breath Taking, First Sight Soul Shaking, One Night Love Making, Next Day Heart Breaking Guy

(MOTOWN, 1963)

A rare, smoochy case of all three Supremes singing lead. See also the wackily titled cha-cha flip (The Man With The) Rock And Roll Banjo Band, where professionalism over banality is impressive indeed. Good to hear banjo on a soul record.

Tyrannosaurus Rex

My People Were Fair And Had Sky In Their Hair... But Now They're Content To Wear Stars On Their Brows

(REGAL ZONOPHONE, 1968)

Ace psych-folk whimsy, with banged gongs intro, Pixiphone and a John Peel bedtime story. Also includes Dwarfish Trumpet Blues.

Faces/Rod Stewart

You Can Make Me Dance, Sing Or Anything (Even Take The Dog For A Walk, Mend A Fuse, Fold Away The Ironing Board, Or Any Other Domestic Shortcomings)

(WARNER BROS, 1974)

Rod and the Faces say ta-ra with a song of domestic bliss, scoring the longest UK chart hit name in the process.

Fairport Convention

Sir B. McKenzie's Daughter's Lament For The 77th Mounted Lancers Retreat From The Straits Of Loch Knombe, In The Year Of Our Lord 1727, On The Occasion Of The Announcement Of Her Marriage To The Laird Of Kinleakie

(ISLAND, 1970)

Reeling folk rock, and a pub quiz question to boot.

Test Dept.

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(FROM *A GOOD NIGHT OUT*, M.O.P, 1987)

Possibly satirical.

Getty, Sean Curtin

The Damned

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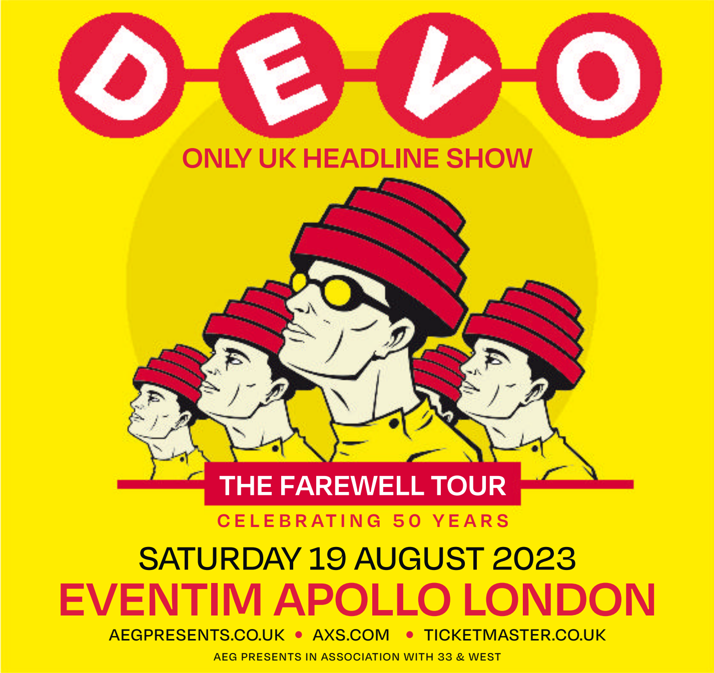

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AEG PRESENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH 13 ARTISTS

By royal appointment: Yusuf/Cat Stevens in La Fabrique Studios, Provence.

FROM DUBVILLE STUDIOS, YUSUF/CAT STEVENS BRINGS REDEMPTIVE LP 17

OVER A DECADE in the making, *King Of A Land* has royalty in its sights. "The Coronation's coming up so I'm going to make sure King Charles gets a copy," smiles Yusuf/Cat Stevens, chatting to MOJO from Dubai via Zoom. "He's ruling over a very damaged political scene, and I find that very frustrating. But I believe music can help us reclaim the narrative."

Yusuf's 17th studio LP often looks through children's eyes while envisaging a kinder society, hence the title track sees a small boy dream of compassionate changes he'd make were he king. "Every child brings a new perception, a new possibility," says Yusuf, whose Watford-based grandchildren sing on the album with their school choir. "But I was a pretty naughty child, so I'm not advertising any of that. Haha!"

Work began at Berlin's Hansa studios in 2011. The LP's 12 richly orchestrated songs emerged after further sessions in Brussels, Provence and London's Air Studios, as well as at Dubville, Yusuf's garage studio in Dubai. "It was almost ready in 2020," he says, "but then the 50th anniversary of *Tea For The Tillerman* came around. My son said, 'Let's re-record it'; I said, 'That's a stupid idea – let's do it!' It interrupted the flow on *King…* but it also enabled Paul [Samwell-Smith] and myself to fix certain things. Sometimes perfecting something takes time."

Songs include How Good It Feels, its orchestration drawing inspiration from Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake, and Highness, of which Yusuf says, "I wanted to go a bit Phil Spector-ish, a bit River Deep, Mountain High." Elsewhere, out-and-out rocker Pagan Run "refers back to a time when it seemed to me that the universe was this series of accidental possibilities that could force you off the planet into a realm that really frightened me." The vintage Moog-sounding synth solo on Son Of Mary, meanwhile, was part-inspired by Wendy Carlos's use of the instrument on her 1968 landmark *Switched-On Bach*.

King Of A Land was mixed at Friar Park, George Harrison's neo-Gothic mansion at Henley-On-Thames, and will be released by Dark Horse Records, the Harrison-founded label that's now run by his son Dhani. Did Yusuf and George ever meet? "We did," he says. "Informally at [photographer] David Bailey's studio. You can find out more in my forthcoming memoir! George was incredibly brave spiritually speaking, looking East when no one else was. In 1969, when I was bedridden with tuberculosis and looking for a way out of my material-world predicament, he was an immense influence. George put me on the path, as it were."

Yusuf admits to being "a little apprehensive" about releasing an album aged almost 75, but not too much. "This album draws upon things I learned growing up near Tin Pan Alley in London, things I learned from musicals about telling stories in different ways… I have plenty more music in me."

James McNair

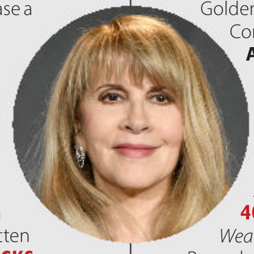
FACT SHEET

Title: *King Of A Land*
Due: June
Production: Paul Samwell-Smith
Songs: Pagan Run/ Train On A Hill/ Things/Highness/ How Good It Feels
The Buzz: "This new record is a culmination. A very clearly defined outcome of where I've been, and where I am."
Yusuf/Cat Stevens

> "I wanted to go a bit Phil Spector-ish, a bit River Deep, Mountain High."
> **YUSUF/CAT STEVENS**

ALSO WORKING

…**DJ SHADOW** will release a new LP this year. He promises "fewer guest vocalists," adding, "I hear both joy and anguish in these songs" …**LLOYD COLE** releases *On Pain* in June. Ex-Commotions **Neil Clark** and **Blair Cowan** appear and have co-written four songs …**STEVIE NICKS** (right) has been in the studio with **Dolly Parton** …**GRAHAM NASH** releases *Now* in May. Titles include Golden Idol, I Watched It All Come Down and his recent **Allan Clarke** co-write, Buddy's Back. Nash calls it, "the most personal [LP] I have ever made. At this point in my life, that's something to say" …**JASON ISBELL & THE 400 UNIT** release *Weathervanes* in June. Recorded at Nashville's Blackbird Studio, with titles including King Of Oklahoma, Cast Iron Skillet and White Beretta, it touches on "adult love… cruelty, regret and redemption" …**THOM YORKE**'s band **The Smile** shared an image of a tape recorder on their Instagram page, leading to new-music speculation …Motown veteran **SMOKEY ROBINSON** releases *Gasms* in May … **TONY IOMMI** has shared updates of a new home studio. "I'm really looking forward to writing another LP," he said …**LEE MAVERS** (below) of Liverpool cults The La's was pictured playing his guitar in an online communication from Chesterfield's direct-to-disc Groovefarm Analog Recording Co in February. "Lee will be returning later in the year," they said. A tantalising piece of new Mavers music can be heard on his brother Gary's online car show Classic Obsession…



Yoriyos Adamos, Getty (2)

Wilco

August 2023

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September 2023

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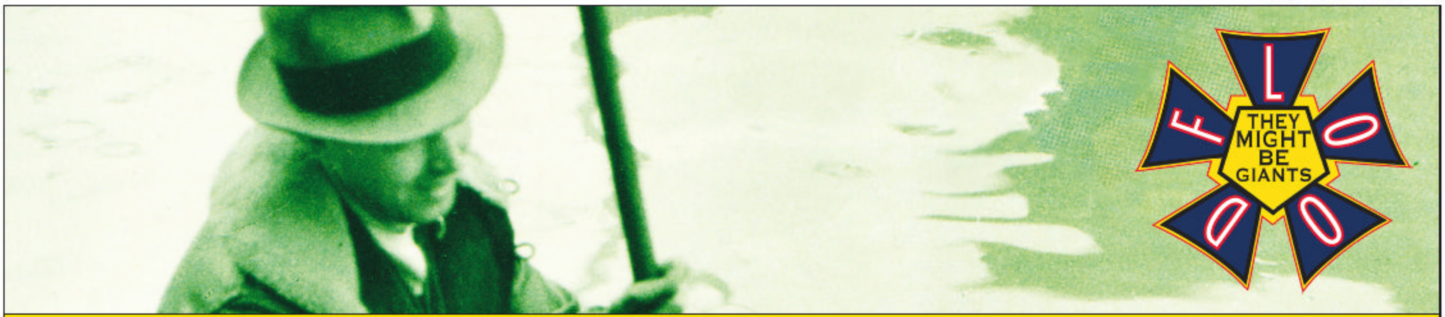

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THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS
AS THEY PERFORM ALL OF
FLOOD

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SAT 18 LONDON ROUNDHOUSE

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MAY
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BY ARRANGEMENT WITH MOTHER ARTISTS

Triple strength: Feist – she contains *Multitudes*.

Sarah Melvin & Colby Richardson

Feist

Canada's veracious original talks war cries, the Arcade Fire situation and calling the gods.

LESLIE FEIST has been making bold, innovative albums since the turn of the century, evolving from the indie faux-jazz of 2004's *Let It Die* to 2017's soul-baring *Pleasure*. A star at home in Canada, she has 11 Junos (the Canadian Brits) to her name. Her appositely titled sixth LP, *Multitudes*, is her first in six years. Its gestation encompassed a period of Covid-induced international turmoil ("all the choices anyone had made turned to amber: I didn't know if I was going to go out again, so my writing turned inwards"); personal joy with the arrival of her adopted daughter; and personal pain with the death of her father. "My growth has pushed me to new Rubicons of self-understanding," she says.

In 2021 and '22, you introduced the new songs via a series of residencies, where you were more installation than pop star.

Rob Sinclair designed Peter Gabriel's 2012 tour and I'd met him when I duetted on Don't Give Up with Peter on one date and got to see inside a production which turned everything on its head. Rob went on to do David Byrne's American Utopia [show], but in-between we had the idea of playing to small amounts of people in huge venues. Dreaming up this scenario, we were like a couple of kids in a sandbox. Doing something so uncommercial was an escapist fantasy that we couldn't make work until the pandemic restricted crowds.

The first 10 seconds of *Multitudes* – clattering drums and chanting – are shocking, in a good way.

It's a war cry. These were quiet songs and there were no drums until my friend, film director Mike Mills, said, "You need to play drums like you play guitar." I'm not a drummer, but there I was with two sticks in my hands. That's why it's so rudimentary. There's no nuance in my drumming.

Calling All The Gods is a medieval madrigal, isn't it?

Oh I love that, but it goes further back. Myself, Todd Dahlhoff and Shahzad Ismaily [her bandmates] used phrases from Emily Wilson's translation of The Odyssey, where any line from any page could be a song lyric, and produced 30 hours of improvisations. Mike Mills suggested one improvisation, saying "calling all the gods" and another saying "the earth sustains all different kinds of people" could make a song together. It's about humanity and compassion. Any one of us can make the world a better place every day with every decision we make. I don't always remember when someone is being aggressive on the road, but as the world is on a brand new scale of migration, there should be a human baseline of empathy.

The renewal of your daughter arriving and the despair of your father dying is life-changing. How did you deal with that?

I could only make sense of it as a songwriter. I'm really lucky my father got to know my daughter for the first year of her life. I saw in his eyes that she was medicine in his arms. My daughter knows her grandpa died and I'm trying to teach her about seasons and cycles. For the first time, I now have the certainty that I will die. It's no longer a concept.

Last September you pulled out of the Arcade Fire tour after Win Butler faced sexual misconduct allegations. Are you at peace with that?

Wholly. I'm grateful I made a move towards well-being, both for myself and for the people who came forwards. There's no easy way to respond to these scenarios and what happens behind closed doors is so unknowable, but I needed to move to a place of compassion. It took a while to find that responsibility in myself, but I didn't think twice about this.

Where do you keep all your Juno awards?

They're on my mum's piano. At Christmas, she decorates them with hats, scarfs and ribbons.

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before.

My obsession is Alone, the reality programme where people face the wilderness alone. They have to build a shelter, find food and survive a winter. I spend my summers off-grid in a cabin with no electricity, hours from the nearest city. We have a wood-stove, but maybe that's too much: when I watch Alone it's like they're daring me to go deeper.

As told to John Aizlewood

Multitudes is released on April 14 on Fiction Records.

TAKE FEIST

Leslie's golden greats.

1. **Frantz Casseus** *Lullaby* (FROM HAITIAN DANCES, FOLKWAYS, 1954)
2. **Buffy Sainte-Marie** *God Is Alive, Magic Is Afoot* (FROM ILLUMINATIONS, VANGUARD, 1969)
3. **Daniela Gesundheit** *Alphabet Of Wrongdoing* (FROM ALPHABET OF WRONGDOING, RETURNING CURRENT, 2020)
4. **La Force** *The Tide* (FROM LA FORCE, ARTS & CRAFTS, 2018)
5. **Hand Habits** *Graves* (FROM FUN HOUSE, SADDLE CREEK, 2021)

> "I spend my summers off-grid in a cabin with no electricity."
> **LESLIE FEIST**

LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

Colin Blunstone

The Zombies' singer remembers the hurricane that was Elvis Presley's Heartbreak Hotel (RCA Victor, 1956).

I would have been just over 10 in 1956. I lived in a block of flats in Hatfield and the neighbours called me 'the boy who sang', because I did, all the time. I'd sing 'You take the high road' and 'I love to go a-wandering' and the theme to Dick Barton: Special Agent – I didn't have any preference!

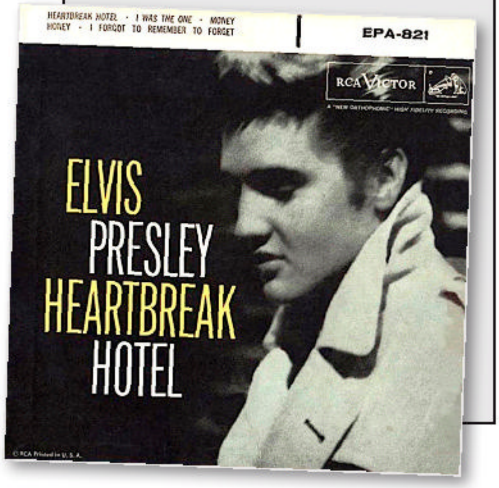
Then I heard Heartbreak Hotel at my friend Gill's house. We listened to it over and over again. Artists in this country then were great in their own way – singers like Frankie Vaughan, David Whitfield and Michael Holliday – but it was like Elvis was from a different planet entirely, with this incredible vocal and drum sound and a completely new, exciting kind of music. I really loved Heartbreak Hotel. It's only about two minutes long but for me it was the beginning of rock'n'roll. Was I singing Heartbreak Hotel out loud when I left? Absolutely! Later, when you saw him on TV, his stage performance was incredible too. He was a new kind of performer. Coming out of the post-war austerity, he signified teenage freedom and angst, in a very stiff-upper-lip, class-ridden social order. People said, "He's the Devil incarnate!" But it was just a bit of fun, you could see it on Elvis's face.

Elvis made such a huge impression on everybody. We'd go to fairgrounds and this one transport café on the A1 just to hear Little Richard and Chuck Berry. Another big one for me was Ricky Nelson's It's Late, because I sang it at the first Zombies rehearsal. I thought I was going to be rhythm guitarist and Rod [Argent, Zombies keyboardist] was going to be the lead singer.

I went to Sun Studio in Memphis in 2012 and stood in the spot where Elvis sang Heartbreak Hotel. It was quite a moment, I have to say.

As told to Ian Harrison

The Zombies' A Different Game is released on Cooking Vinyl on March 31. The band tour the UK in April.


HEARTBREAK HOTEL · I WAS THE ONE · MONEY HONEY · I FORGOT TO REMEMBER TO FORGET
EPA-821
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RECORD STORE DAY IS HERE AGAIN! BUT WHAT TO BUY?

TRY AND PICK up David Bowie's earliest 45s and the money's scandalous. But with new release *Laughing With Liza – The Vocalion And Deram Singles 1964-1967+* (Decca) you get box-fresh facsimiles of his first four singles, plus a bonus 7-inch of the Love You Till Tuesday version of Space Oddity and an unheard take of notorious Bowie cupboard-skeleton The Laughing Gnome.

Welcome to Record Store Day 2023, coming to a vinyl outlet near you on April 22. A global celebration of physical formats now in its 16th year, there are more than 400 limited-edition releases, with much to tempt the music connoisseur. Consider the Stones' *Beggars Banquet* (UMR/ABKCO) on Salt Of The Earth-inspired coloured vinyl, for example, or 2020 Lennon best-of *Gimme Some Truth* as a box of nine 10-inch EPs (Apple), or on 7-inch from Bob Marley, non-LP rarity Mr. Chatterbox (Gorgon) and a 50th anniversary unreleased version of Stir It Up (UMC/Island).

New takes on familiar records are also plentiful. The five-LP *Nuggets 50th Anniversary Box* (Rhino), for example, adds an LP of songs that didn't make Lenny Kaye's original cut and, intriguingly, the never-released double-disc *Nuggets Vol. 2*. Brian Eno's 2022 LP *FOREVERANDEVERNOMORE* gets an instrumental release as *FOREVER VOICELESS* (UMR), while Marc Almond has curated a new 2-LP Artist's Cut of his 1996 solo album *Fantastic Star* (UMR/Mercury).

Other albums expanded with bonus material include Elton John's *Don't Shoot Me I'm Only The Piano Player* (Mercury/UME), Pearls Before Swine's *One Nation Underground* and *Balaklava* (Earth), and Björk and Dirty Projectors' *Mount Wittenberg Orca* (Domino). Bill Evans' *Treasures – Solo, Trio & Orchestral Records From Denmark (1965-69)* (Elemental), meanwhile, presents unreleased recordings in a three-LP set. Albums getting their first ever vinyl pressings include Wilco's *Crosseyed Strangers: An Alternate Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* (Nonesuch), Bert Jansch's '90s LPs *Toy Balloon* and *When The Circus Comes To Town* (Earth), and Cesária Évora's *Radio Mindelo (Early Recordings)* (Music On Vinyl).

Elsewhere, other trends emerge: with Blur's Japan-only 1994 flipsides comp *The Special Collector's Edition* (Parlophone) getting its first vinyl pressing, there are also newly-curated B-side LPs from Madness, The Pogues and Tori Amos. Foals, Leftfield and Hugh Cornwell all present dub versions of recent releases, while demo collections include Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells* prelims *Opus One: The 1971 Demos* (UMR/EMI), Carole King's *The Legendary Demos* (Legacy) and Suede's *The Suede Demos* (Demon).

The allure of coloured wax is, as ever, represented. The Fall's *Live 1977* (Cherry Red) is 'Blood Red', Ali Farka Touré's *Green* (BMG) gets its first vinyl pressing since 1988 on, of course, green vinyl, and Jonathan Richman's *Jonathan Goes Country* (Craft) is on a 'Red Cowboy Boots' coloured LP. Picture discs include albums by The Cure, ELP, Sea Power, Ol' Dirty Bastard and Simple Minds, and singles including Suggs & Weller's Oo Do U Fink U R (BMG) and selections from cult horror movie The Devil Rides Out (Silva Screen), the latter on pentagram-shaped 7-inch.

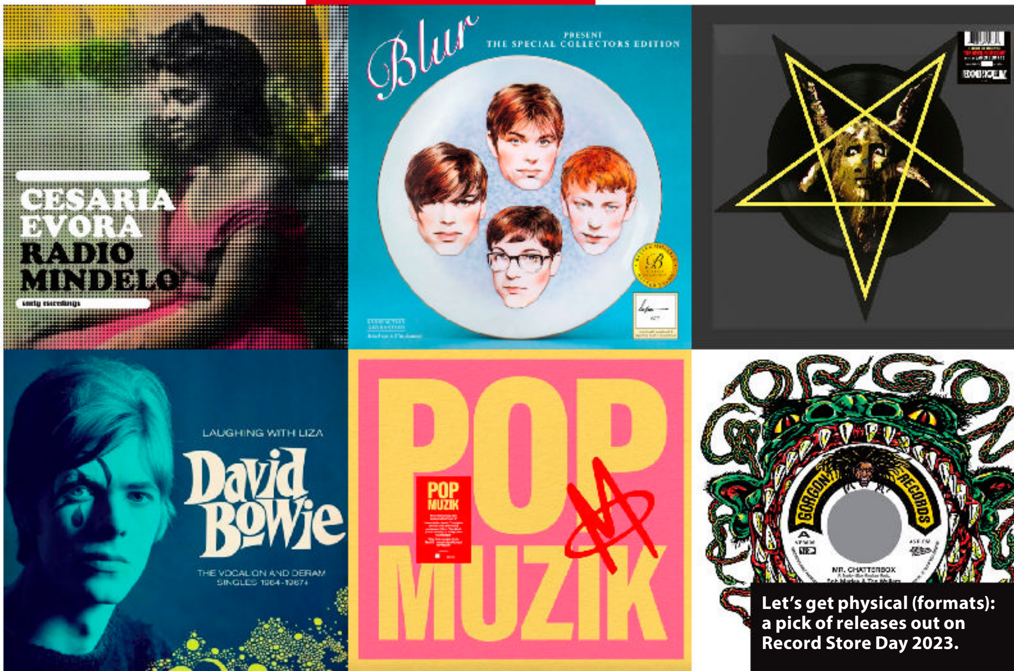
We could go on – how about that covetable red vinyl 12-inch of M's classic Pop Muzik (BMG) with unreleased song Baby Close The Window, or edition-of-666 demonic country comp *Hillbillies In Hell* (LITA), or Suicide playing Born In The USA live in Paris in 1988 on *A Way Of Life – The Rarities EP* (BMG)? Or those live albums from Stevie Nicks, The Black Keys and Tangerine Dream? Good hunting, record junkies.

Ian Harrison

"Suicide playing Born In The USA live in Paris in 1988?"

Record Store Day 2023 is on April 22. See recordstoreday.co.uk for participating shops and releases.

Alex Lake



Let's get physical (formats): a pick of releases out on Record Store Day 2023.

The *Swagger*-era Blue Aeroplanes – with Gerard Langley at front – West Germany, 1990.

The Blue Aeroplanes in 2000, circa *Cavaliers*.

Taking aim: The Blue Aeroplanes (Gerard Langley centre, Wojtek Dmochowski far right) in 2023.

BRISTOL ART-ROCKERS THE BLUE AEROPLANES SOAR AGAIN

"WE'RE NEVER included in round-ups of 'speaking' singers," says Gerard Langley, captain of The Blue Aeroplanes and august exponent of rock band *sprechgesang*. "But there's one advantage," he adds, referring no doubt to the front-talkers of Dry Cleaning, Yard Act and others. "So many are doing it now that we don't sound weird to people, whereas in the '80s and '90s it was all, 'What the *fuck's* he doing?'"

The timing, then, is right for the return of long-time Bristol resident Langley and his shifting cohort (the band is currently a septet, having had almost 50 full or part-time members passing through the ranks). Since playing their first gig in 1981, they've specialised in thrilling art-rock pileups of guitars, typically three in each line-up, adroitly weaving Velvets, Television and Richard Thompson influences beneath Langley's cryptic vocalising. Pre-Bez interpretive dancer Wojtek Dmochowski, meanwhile, added frenetic on-stage energy and spectacle.

Having built a following – and a reputation for a tearaway live encore of Tom Verlaine's Breakin' In My Heart featuring 10 guitarists or more – a 1989 tour with Aeroplane fans R.E.M. led to signing to major label Chrysalis/Ensign and a shot at success. With new guitarists Rodney Allen and Alex Lee injecting youth and more concise songwriting, the albums *Swagger* (1990) and UK Top 40 entry *Beatsongs* (1991) upped the ante further. But as airplay reports strongly suggested *Beatsongs'* lead single Yr Own World would go Top 20 in America, Chrysalis was sold to EMI, and everything shut down. EMI eventually released the Aeroplanes after two years. "After that it was all about Britpop, and we were old news," says Langley. "So we stayed away for five years."

They returned to contention in 2000, and twelfth album *Culture Gun* arrives this April. It's only their fifth in 23 years: mitigating circumstances surround several prolonged absences, most recently Langley's stage three cancer and two heart operations, which kiboshed 2017's *Welcome, Stranger!'s* subsequent tour and a more immediate follow-up. "We were just getting popular again," says a rueful Langley. On top, members' day jobs – including Langley's 12 years at the Bristol Institute Of Modern Music, mostly as Head Of Songwriting (George Ezra is his most lauded student) – and distant geographical locations complicated matters further.

Yet still they endure. Amazingly, Dmochowski – now in his mid-sixties – still dances with them. "He's still massively fit, still does 300 daily sit-ups," says Langley, who continues to have health issues. "I have these sudden drops in energy levels. My partner is very against me doing more than two shows in a row. But we're happy being a cottage industry. And younger people are coming to our gigs. If I get properly fit, we may expand again."

Martin Aston

Culture Gun is out April 28 on Last Night From Glasgow.

"In the '80s and '90s it was all, 'What the fuck's he doing?'"
GERARD LANGLEY

BLUE HEAVEN

Three Aeroplane trips.

Tolerance

(FIRE, 1986)

Wiry, punchy and gloriously arty during the dressed-down C86 boom, their second record is the fulcrum of the first great line-up, including Angelo Bruschini (who later joined Massive Attack) and trad folk maverick Ian Kearey (Oyster Band).

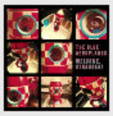
Swagger

(ENSIGN, 1990)

Major label and major producer Gil Norton (Pixies, Bunnymen) inspired the Aeroplanes to modernise and expand; Jacket Hangs is the closest they got to R.E.M., whilst …And Stones had a whiff of Talking Heads' *Remain In Light*.

Welcome, Stranger!

(ART STAR, 2017)



Thirty-five years into the fray, their first album in six years crackles with urgency and choruses to burn, starting with acrid showbiz/identity crisis pounder Elvis Festival.

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06 Oct	**HIGH WYCOMBE** Swan Theatre
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13 Oct	**FOLKESTONE** Leas Cliff Hall
14 Oct	**GUILDFORD** G Live
19 Oct	**GLASGOW** Royal Concert Hall
20 Oct	**HALIFAX** Victoria Theatre
21 Oct	**GATESHEAD** Sage
25 Oct	**SWANSEA** Grand Theatre
26 Oct	**WESTON SUPER MARE** Playhouse Theatre
27 Oct	**TRURO** Hall For Cornwall
28 Oct	**BARNSTAPLE** Queens Theatre
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03 Nov	**LONDON** Cadogan Hall
04 Nov	**NORTHAMPTON** Derngate
05 Nov	**BUXTON** Opera House
08 Nov	**BLACKPOOL** Grand Theatre
09 Nov	**LEICESTER** De Montfort Hall
10 Nov	**CHATHAM** Central Theatre
11 Nov	**CAMBRIDGE** Corn Exchange
23 Nov	**TUNBRIDGE WELLS** Assembly Hall Theatre
24 Nov	**EASTBOURNE** Congress Hall
25 Nov	**BOURNEMOUTH** Pavilion Theatre
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MAY 11	BRISTOL	FLEECE
MAY 12	BIRMINGHAM	ASYLUM
MAY 13	SOUTHAMPTON	1865
MAY 14	TAVISTOCK	WHARF
MAY 19	BARNARD CASTLE	THE WITHAM
MAY 20	GLASGOW	THE GARAGE
MAY 21	NEWCASTLE	UNIVERSITY
MAY 25	NOTTINGHAM	RESCUE ROOMS
MAY 26	BRADFORD	NIGHTRAIN
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A KILIMANJARO & TKO PRESENTATION

Lisa O'Neill: letting it flow and seeing where it goes.

> "If anything has a story in it and mirrors society, it's folk music."
> **LISA O'NEILL**

IRISH FOLK SEER LISA O'NEILL TAKES THE UNLIKELY WALK OF LIFE

CAVAN METAPHYSICIST Lisa O'Neill is telling MOJO how Dire Straits' Brothers In Arms qualifies as a great modern folk song. "'There's so many different worlds, so many different suns, and we have just one world, but we live in different ones,'" she recites lovingly, sipping green tea on a couch in her record label's London office. "I think that's still reflected today. I found that music when I was in my teens and that song could still inspire a whole album for me."

A broad-minded take on what constitutes folk continues to bring results for O'Neill, whose eerie version of Bob Dylan's All The Tired Horses featured in TV's Peaky Blinders. Her dizzying fifth LP, *All Of This Is Chance*, fuses poetic magic realism and down-home traditional sounds as it scrabbles to reconcile a sense of Incredible String Band-style cosmic wonder with the slate-grey realities of the iPhone age. "I've been very reluctant to let myself be pigeonholed," she explains. "But I think all music is folk, and if anything has a story in it and mirrors society, then it's folk music."

O'Neill's free-flowing songs are rooted in very modern issues of advancing technology and retreating nature, but the mirror they hold to the world is a uniquely distorted one. Crass by way of *Astral Weeks*, *All Of This Is Chance* (the sleeve featuring dandelion seeds scattered by a dog's sneeze) presents a dense sound world which is daunting, bewitching and powerfully strange.

"I'm abstract in my thinking," O'Neill says apologetically as she tries to explain her creative process. "It's like painting and I often feel like the instruments are like colours. I play just for relaxation with watercolours. I love it when one spills into the other and makes another colour. It's a good way to describe the making of music. You let go a little bit and let it flow and see what it does."

At 18, O'Neill left Ballyhaise to study songwriting at Dublin's Ballyfermot College, and found herself drawn into a revival of traditional music, eventually linking up with the members of Lankum, who she credits with introducing her to her new label, Rough Trade. "I was quite overwhelmed about leaving home but before I knew it I was surrounded by other musicians who were as excited by making new music as me," she says. "I always thought I would come back home because I'm a very family person, but Dublin held me and it's been 23 years."

Busy schedules mean she no longer runs into the Lankum crowd quite so often at the kind of informal pub sessions where they first honed their craft. Everyone is moving on to bigger things, and a March 23 date at London's Barbican is further evidence of O'Neill's willingness to put herself out there and invite larger audiences to spark off her rapturous visions. "I feel a lot – there's a vibration, a hum in everything that inspires me," she says. "Songs are amazing vehicles. Just a line or a word can pull you into a whole rabbit hole."

Jim Wirth

FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Joanna Newsom, Bill Callahan, Kate Bush, Nick Cave.
- A methodical worker, O'Neill might play a song alone 500 times before her accompanists are invited to "let their imagination in". "It's like they come and dance with me," she explains.
- It is no accident that the lyrics of *All Of This Is Chance* feature lots of birds. "They are so impressive in ways that maybe we fall short," O'Neill says. "We're so concerned about ourselves – they've seen more and they need less. And they can sing."
- O'Neill's pet hates include fans videoing her shows on their phones. "You're creating an energy wall between you and I," she says. "I hold the live gig so high and I think it's really worth protecting."

KEY TRACKS

- Old Note
- If I Was A Painter
- All Of This Is Chance

INTRODUCING SAM BURTON, THE LA SCENE'S TAROT-READING RHINESTONE COWBOY

BACKSTAGE AT London's Roundhouse, Sam Burton is preparing for the latest show on a European tour as main support to Weyes Blood. How, MOJO wonders, did the low-profile 32-year-old singer-songwriter land such a prestigious gig?

"I read tarot cards for people and I did hers," Burton says. "I've been doing it for myself for a while, I find it really therapeutic, and during the pandemic I started doing it for other people. Honestly, I feel that every tour I've gotten on was because of that. It always ends up being like, 'Hey, do you want to go on tour?'"

Not to cast aspersions on Burton's tarot-reading abilities, but those breaks also might be down to the calibre of his music. Coming out later this year, Burton's second album, *Dear Departed*, presents him as a classic LA country troubadour, and one who can harness a melancholic beauty redolent of Glen Campbell. It's a comparison helped no end by producer [and Roger Waters' touring guitarist] Jonathan Wilson wrapping up Burton's tales of lost love and hitting life's lonely highway in lush orchestrations.

Burton maintains he didn't set out to make a retro-sounding record. But he was drawn to some well-worn songwriting tropes, reframing them to fit his own circumstances as he found himself after a break-up, without a job, apartment or record deal, working on a farm to make ends meet. "I definitely tried to play with some cliché. I didn't shy away from it," he says. "To me, it feels like holding hands with the past and acknowledging it. We're not reinventing the wheel. It's about having a kinship with these things but also trying to make it personal. The analogy I would use would be like a director making a genre movie, you can make it about yourself."

> **"I read tarot cards for Weyes Blood."**
> **SAM BURTON**

Burton's own story began in a small conservative town outside of Salt Lake City. Snooping around in his stepfather's closet one day, he came across a guitar and was promptly forbidden to touch it. "So I snuck it out when he was at work and taught myself to play a few chords," Burton recalls. "As a kid, I was a rebellious little asshole. When I showed him, I think he was impressed that I was actually interested in something and had shown some application, so he bought me my own."

Burton's first band, The Circulars, produced a decent enough, Mazzy Star-influenced debut, 2016's *Are You Waiting For The Setting Sun*. But it wasn't until he relocated to LA that Burton really hit his stride as a songwriter and released his debut solo LP, 2020's *I Can Go With You*, via a one-album deal with Tompkins Square. Now signed to Partisan, the shimmering Nashville skylines of *Dear Departed* feel like the perfect setting for Burton's songs, so it's surprising to hear he's not sure how his future musical endeavours will manifest. "I want to keep it open. The shit I'm writing is so simple you could dress it up a lot of ways," he shrugs. "For me, songwriting is kind of mystical. You have to create music that is just there. It's like chasing something in the dark."

Chris Catchpole

FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Glen Campbell, Scott Walker, Jackson C. Frank
- While he was writing *Dear Departed*, Burton spent his days fixing the roof of an old friend's house in Utah ("The more boring the work was, the more meditative I found it"), before moving to a farm owned by another friend's grandmother in upstate California. "I'd work in the fields to earn my keep," he says.
- Burton was one of the musicians who contributed to Ben Schwab's 2022 project, *Sylvie*, an album that had a similar approach to connecting with the past as Burton, having been inspired by demos found by Schwab that his father had recorded in the '70s. "We influenced each other a lot."

KEY TRACKS

- Maria
- I Don't Blame You
- Looking Back Again

Playing his cards right: Sam Burton chases something in the dark.

Jacob Boll, Avalon.red

MOJO PLAYLIST

Attention! It's the month's best grooves, riffs and jazz-drone.

1 PULP LIKE A FRIEND

As MOJO went to press, the passing of Pulp bassist Steve Mackey (above, centre) was announced. Until next issue's tribute, a poignant 1998 reflection on closeness which gear-changes into a celebratory rock-out.

Find it: *streaming services*

2 TINARIWEN KEK ALGHALM

With producer Daniel Lanois on pedal steel, the Tuareg Dinosaur Jr explore the shared roots of desert blues and country.

Find it: *streaming services*

3 HORSE LORDS BENDING TO THE LASH

Pulverising quadratic math-funk, plus circular breathing rituals and a drum solo, from the Baltimore noiseniks, live in Leipzig.

Find it: *Bandcamp*

4 SUEDE BECAUSE THE NIGHT

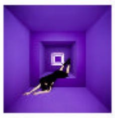
From Radio 2's Piano Room with the BBC concert orchestra, a full-bore cover of Patti/Bruce's epic of ecstatic foolishness.

Find it: *YouTube*

5 NATURAL INFORMATION SOCIETY STIGMERGY

Josh Abrams expands his Chicago jazz-drone collective into a stately big band. As if Mingus's 1964 *Town Hall Concert* setlist included Terry Riley's In C, roughly.

Find it: *Bandcamp*



6 OLIVIA JEAN TROUBLE

If you're looking for trouble, former Black Belle and Jack White's better half is in exactly the right place on strident garage-glam nugget, a foretelling of May's *Raving Ghost* LP.

Find it: *streaming services*

7 DURAND JONES LORD HAVE MERCY

Jones parks the soul ballads for this invigorating, Springsteen-goes-to-church solo track. Grace and groove in equal measure.

Find it: *streaming services*

8 DRAAG MIDNIGHT PARADISE

Los Angeles shoegazers plunge into the electric smog and find transcendence and release.

Find it: *Dark Fire Heresy album, streaming services*

9 BILL ORCUTT SOME HIDDEN PURPOSE

Orcutt's solo guitar sound can be thorny and dissonant. But here's a gorgeous entry point into an astonishing soundworld; tender acoustic improv, radical kin of John Fahey.

Find it: *Bandcamp*

10 CASINO BURNING LOVE

Neo-Northern soul reanimators take on Elvis's song of exploding passion. Stomping!

Find it: *streaming services*

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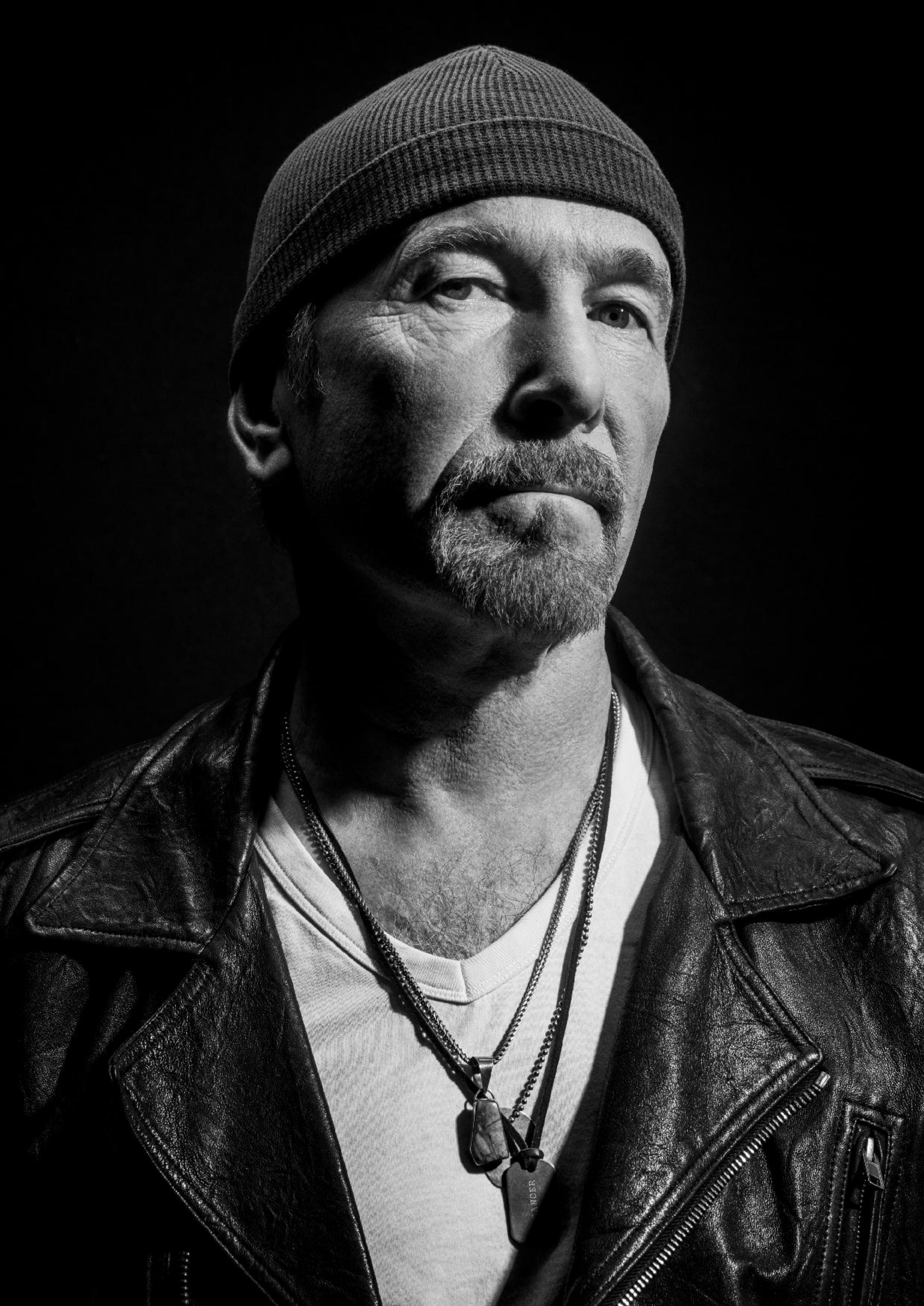
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THE MOJO INTERVIEW

U2's sonic scientist has just reanimated 40 of their classic songs: the latest experiment in six decades of tinkering, questioning, taking it all quite seriously. "Being in a band, we didn't want it to be a trivial thing," says The Edge.

Interview by **KEITH CAMERON** • Portrait by **ROGER KISBY**

DAVE EVANS STILL REMEMBERS HIS FIRST electric guitar, the one he watched his older brother Dick build in their family's north Dublin garden shed. Two years later, Dave, by then known as Edge, along with the other three members of U2 spent the summer of 1978 in that same shed, rehearsing songs for their breakthrough demo tape.

"It was this gaudy yellow, Flying V kind of guitar, but it worked," says The Edge. "I think there was a competition at school, so Dick took it as a sort of science project. I was in charge of helpful suggestions and encouragement. We both played it a lot."

The last time Edge saw Dick's science project it was flying through the air at Dublin's Project Arts Centre, tossed from the stage during a show by the Virgin Prunes, the yin to U2's yang on the city's post-punk scene. Plenty more guitars have passed through his hands since. The Edge is as synonymous with the instrument as anyone from the rock era, thanks to his signature contributions to U2's 45-year career, a bulging inventory of questing, minimalist flash.

MOJO catches up with The Edge in New York, roughly midway between Dublin and Los Angeles, the cities the 61-year-old calls home. He's shouldering promotional duties for *Songs Of Surrender*, U2's 15th studio album, one that owes its existence more than most to Edge's musical curiosity, as 40 U2 songs are deconstructed and re-cast into often striking, low-key contexts. Released to accompany Bono's recent memoir, Surrender, the album emphasises the co-dependent relationship between guitarist and singer. The Edge's experimental urges, meanwhile, re-activate the band's best art-rock instincts.

"It was a liberating experience," he says. "Pure playfulness, and no expectation. Instead of designing the songs to work on a rock'n'roll stage, to connect with a large audience, we're replacing that intensity with an *intimacy*."

Our interview is four days before the official announcement of U2's return to the rock'n'roll stage in a brand new Las Vegas venue. Predictably, then, Edge is guarded about details of 'U2: UV Achtung Baby Live At The Sphere', and its most contentious aspect: the absence of Larry Mullen Jr ("an amazing drummer and an integral part of what we do," Edge says) to undergo and recuperate from surgery, and his replacement by the relatively unknown Bram van den Berg.

But if some fans can't bear the idea of U2 without their founding heartbeat, how inconceivable would it be without its creative engine and, arguably, most distinctive component? The Edge hopes we'll never have to find out.

"The thought that I can wake up one day, go to the piano or the guitar and write a song that's gonna be around for hundreds of years – I'm inspired by that idea. The song is still such a powerful thing."

Did making *Songs Of Surrender* cast any of your songs in a new light?

Quite a few. The lyrics particularly took on this completely different quality, because they're the centrepiece of these arrangements. We started ➢

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

Daniel Lanois on his pal's all-surface prowess.

"His attention to detail is incredible. He's like a scientist – always in search of the unknown. And the way he supports the top line in a song – he's the master. On top of that, as a rhythm guitarist, he could have played with James Brown, he's that good. Just listen to Mysterious Ways. *And* he's an amazing downhill skier."

Roger Kisby, Ward Robinson

bumping into new lyric ideas. With Bad, Bono started writing it again, from the first-person this time. Sunday Bloody Sunday, the same – we got to the final verse and Bono says, "I think we can improve on that." And with Stories For Boys, we took the scissors and completely rewrote that lyric from the perspective of now. Because Stories For Boys was written by a bunch of boys. We were 17 or 18. So now, we're looking at those young guys, from this distance of time and experience, to give another light to what that song was about.

You were born in England, to Welsh parents, then grew up in Ireland. Did that patchwork cultural identity leave a lasting impact?

I think it did. I found out years later that I was born in the same hospital as Billy Bragg. So it would be funny to think, if my parents had not moved, would I be in music, and if so what band would I be in? We moved to Ireland when I was one. My parents being Welsh, they gravitated to, I suppose, a mix of local friends and ex-pats they'd met through various social opportunities. But we were growing up on the streets, hanging out with local kids. Growing up feeling different is significant when you're a kid, and that definitely gave me from early on a slightly outsider perspective. Which is useful, if you're writing songs.

You went to Mount Temple School, as did all the other future members of U2. A lucky coincidence?

I think it was attractive to my parents because it had a good reputation but wasn't a strongly religious-based education. My elder brother went there earlier and it was already an amalgamation of various different schools. The year I went, it turned comprehensive – which basically meant it was twice the size and accepted all-comers. So it was a mixture of different people, from different traditions. Boys and girls, all religious persuasions and socio-economic backgrounds. A fascinating place, because you got to rub shoulders with the kids of bankrobbers and the kids of chartered accountants. The ethos was they wanted to try and be as progressive as possible. Religious classes were more about spirituality than any particular persuasion. I think it was an important part of the U2 story. Not only did it offer us the opportunity to meet, but we were allowed, for instance, to use school property on the weekends to rehearse. That would never have happened in the more conservative religious schools – rock'n'roll would have been seen as something dangerous, something negative. Talking to Bob Geldof about his school experience, it couldn't be more different. And that was in the space of 10 years, maybe less. So Ireland was changing quickly. And we were the beneficiaries.

Was your brother Dick a musical mentor to you?

We're very close, and we hung out a lot as kids. Our local friends were all into music. So we would always make a point of being in somebody's house for the Old Grey Whistle Test or Top Of The Pops. During the summer evenings, we'd meet at the end of the road – there was a kind of local substation, with an area of concrete in front of it. People would bring guitars. So the first time listening to live music not played in the church or at school was this little group, and that encouraged me to learn guitar. I would have been about 12 or 13. My mother bought a guitar for my brother, it cost one pound in the jumble sale. That's what we both learned chords on. The first song I learned to play was T.Rex – (*sings Hot Love*) "She's my woman of gold and she's not very old, a-a-ah." Then that became my entire focus. I used to drive everyone crazy because we lived in a fairly small house, the living room was where everybody was. So we might be watching television and I'd be just playing guitar along to whatever the movie was or the TV show, joining in. My mother threw cushions at me on many occasions! But that playing along was useful.

Dick played in The Hype, a prototype version of U2 – was there any awkwardness between you when he was eased out?

I'm very confrontation averse. So I don't think we ever had a fight about it, or even a particular discussion about it. We basically made it be known, because Dick was no longer in school – he had gone to college – that the four of us had taken a new direction. But literally in the same week that we had made the decision to move on and look for a new name and start working as a four-piece, our pals the Virgin Prunes decided they were gonna form a band. Dick moved into the Virgin Prunes. So I'd say it was a pretty easy transition.

What was the first U2 song that you thought was good?

Within the space of a few weeks, Bono had the beginnings of Out Of Control. I had a song called… God, what did we call it? It's so long ago. One of our live songs – it never made the album. And Cartoon World, another one I came up with. It seemed there was this kind of spark. Really, if I'm being honest, when we saw The Jam and the Sex Pistols on Top Of The Pops, that was lighting the touchpaper for us. Like, "Wow, if they can do it, we can do it." We took a lot of encouragement from seeing basically garage bands appearing on Top Of The Pops. Up to then it seemed an impenetrable world, the music business, particularly when you're watching it all from Dublin.

The reworked I Will Follow and 11 O'Clock Tick Tock on *Songs Of Surrender* prove how sturdy those early songs were.

I think there was an inventiveness to that first album, which looking back I find pretty astonishing. And it was that moment in music culture. A lot of bands were discarding previous influences, looking to find sounds and tonalities and chords that were fresh and different. The influence of German music was much bigger than I realised at that time. Stockhausen had

A LIFE IN PICTURES

The Edge of glory: Dave down the days.

1 Stories for boys: the infant Dave Evans with older brother Dick.

2 Don't believe the hype: U2 emerge at Mount Temple School, Dublin, 1978.

3 Close to The Edge: up on the roof, Cork Country Club Hotel, March 2, 1980.

4 Another time, another place: U2 backstage at the Old Waldorf, San Francisco, March 20, 1981, (from left) Larry Mullen Jr, Bono, The Edge, Adam Clayton.

5 Bite the bullets: The Edge and Bono on-stage at Wembley Stadium on the *Joshua Tree* tour, June 12, 1987.

6 "An example of hopeless optimism on our part": The Edge for sale on PopMart, June 18, 1997.

7 No fly zone: The Edge and Bono, MCI Arena, Washington DC, June 14, 2001.

8 Two hearts beat as one: The Edge with William W. Li, president and medical director of the Angiogenesis Foundation, Washington DC, June 19, 2017.

9 The Edge in December 1984, still trying to find what he's looking for: "I don't want to jinx ourselves, but there's a lot of great material waiting."

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Courtesy of The Edge, Ivan Erskine, Getty (7)

been teaching a lot of young kids who went into contemporary music, the guys from Can and Kraftwerk and Neu!, and they were influencing a lot of UK acts, like Siouxsie And The Banshees. We were lapping it all up. So I Will Follow has nothing to do with the blues, nothing to do with the music that had preceded it. Same with 11 O'Clock Tick Tock – it's much more like Kurt Weill, or something from a classical music context. I'm thinking about Television, who were a big influence early on, and of course, we just lost Tom Verlaine. That was so striking to me – these guys are playing guitars, the same instruments all these rock bands from five years earlier were using, but they sound completely different. So I took that as a real throwdown – what can we do that sounds like no one else?

You were in good company – your post-punk guitar contemporaries were the likes of Keith Levene, Robert Smith, John McGeoch, Will Sergeant…

Stuart Adamson from the Skids as well. Great, innovative stuff. As you rightly point out, those guitar players are people I looked up to and got a lot of encouragement from. John McGeoch in Magazine had an incredible use of sound. It was a great time to be a guitarist. There was this ideological shift. Certain things you could not do. Bending guitar notes was outlawed. Funnily enough, talking to [U2 producer] Steve Lillywhite about this afterwards, he would say – because we called them "nurdles" – he said, "That's funny, XTC call them 'Ernies', and they're not doing any of those either." I guess these things come in cycles. And at that moment, all that kind of guitar hero stuff was just so uncool.

Nurdles were out, but you made good use of a certain game-changing delay pedal.

We had an echo machine down in rehearsal and Bono said, "Why don't you plug in and see what that sounds like?" Soon enough, we had the early version of A Day Without Me. Then I went, I like this, I'm gonna see what's available. I don't think the Electro-Harmonix Memory Man had been out for very long, but I got to play one in the guitar shop. It had rotary controls, so there was no way of knowing the precise millisecond delay you were getting, but it had wonderful modulation controls, which gives the sound a kind of subtle shift, like a tremolo vibrato. So I invested a considerable amount of my available funds and bought the pedal. It was such a catalyst for ideas and guitar parts. If you're a rock'n'roll three-piece – bass, drums, and one guitar – it's hard to make it sound different. But with echo, you're introducing something of the machine age, a completely different aesthetic. We didn't have drum machines, we didn't have synthesizers, but we had the echo – this different sonic place to go. It became such a big part of the first album particularly.

> "We didn't have **drum machines or synthesizers,** but we had the echo – **this different sonic place to go."**

Around *October* (1981), you had a wobble when you wondered if your membership of the Shalom religious community was incompatible with being in U2. What would you have done if you had left the band?

I've no idea what I ultimately would have done but I would have been a very frustrated person (*laughs*). Because it would have been so wrong. I just said, "We can sit here and second guess the existence of our band and this route we've taken with our lives. Or we could go the other way, and see what that feels like, see what opportunities open up. For the next few weeks, I'm not going to be in the band." Bono says, "OK, I'll do it with you." We actually left U2 for that period. Just to force the issue, to see what would emerge from that. Within a week or two, all confirmation was in the opposite direction – "This is BS, there's no real reason why music shouldn't be what I do with my life." As Bono says in his book, writing Sunday Bloody Sunday answered the question, because it brought the two aspirations together. Being in a band, up to that point, we didn't want it to be a trivial thing, we didn't want it to be about girls and late nights in smoky venues and having a great time, not contributing in any way. Writing that song, I suppose, gave us a vision for what it might be for us if we continued but used our music to attempt to make some positive difference. We answered the question with a song.

What's the state of your faith today?

Uh, mature (*laughs*). I'm still questioning. I've been having great conversations with Brian Cox, the particle physicist. Brian doesn't believe in God. I think he'd call himself agnostic more than an atheist, but I think he's good friends with the Bishop of Durham, or another religious establishment figure. And in conversations with his friend, they came to the conclusion that they pretty much agree on everything, with the one caveat that the bishop believes there is a God. So my faith now would be much more open-minded, I guess. I totally believe in science, have no issues with evolution or

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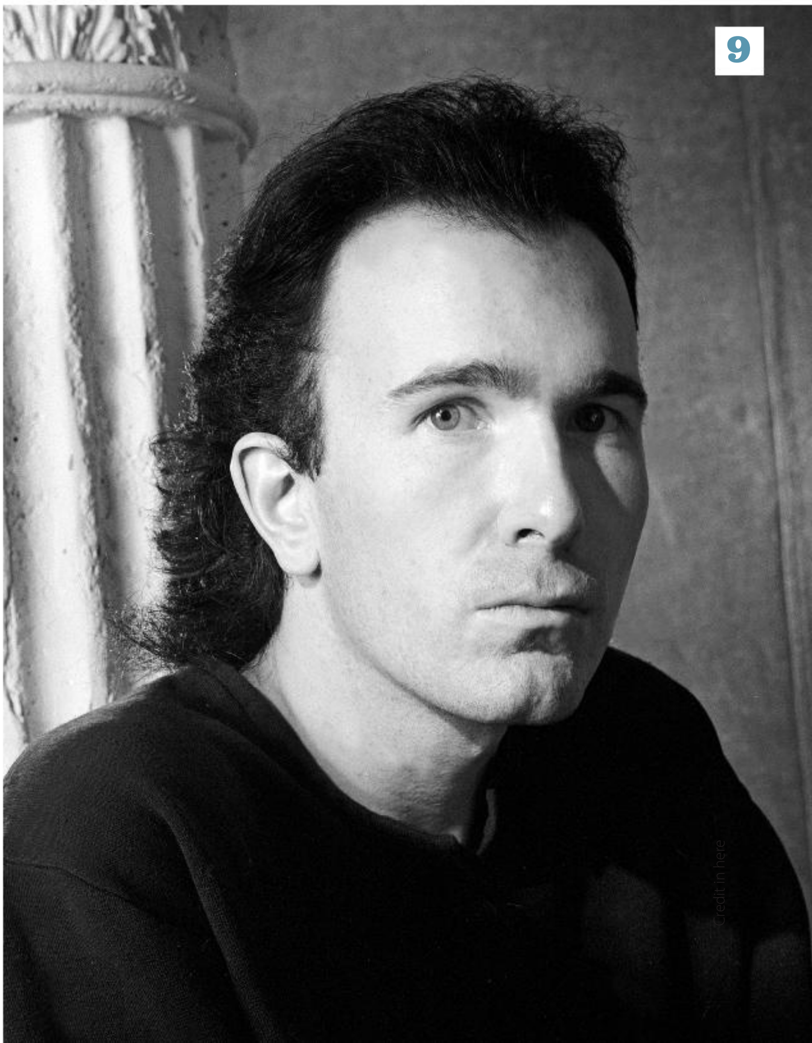
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Roger Kisby

“**Music can’t be work** – if music sounds like work, **forget it.** It has to come from **a place of freedom.**”

⋖ anything like that. It’s self-evident that’s how our world arrived. But at the same time, I wouldn’t poo-poo intuition and a way to connect with what you might call ‘big c consciousness’. As opposed to ‘small c consciousness’, which is our own individual consciousness. I still feel like a student on so many levels.

In 2016 you played your guitar in the Sistine Chapel – surely as close to God as any member of U2 has been.

(*Laughs*) I made sure I thanked the priest for the loan of the hall! That was quite an experience. But I was there not because I was a member of U2, but because of my curiosity in medical science. I’m on the board of a foundation called the Angiogenesis Foundation, which is looking at innovations in medicine, particularly around this system called angiogenesis or blood vessel development. I am insatiably curious about the world and science. So in the end, curiosity didn’t kill this cat – it got him into the Sistine Chapel.

Bono has said he wove the breakdown of your first marriage into the lyrical themes of *Achtung Baby*. Did you appreciate that exposure?

I definitely was paying attention. But I quickly came to the conclusion there were references to other friends who’d gone through similar things. So it was nicely obscure and great fuel for lyrics. So I was fine with it. And I think he would have naturally understood when to pull back if it was getting too personal. It was a really difficult time for me, but… (*laughs*) there’s one great anecdote and I think it explains the difference between music and emotional intensity. I was doing the guitar solo for Love Is Blindness, this cathartic moment to let it all happen through my guitar. I played what I thought was this crazy, emotionally driven solo. Afterwards, Danny [Lanois, co-producer] came on the intercom and said, “Yeah, Edge, that was good, but I think you could do it better. Could you try again?” The solo I ended up playing expressed way better what I was wanting to say. But it had to be done in a cold, dispassionate frame of mind. If you let your emotions absolutely take over, it’s not gonna work.

Have U2’s music and extra-curricular campaigning ever impeded each other?

That’s a hard question. Because they’re so intermingled, it’d be very hard to imagine one without the other. There’s obviously been challenging moments, particularly when Bono was making great strides in America and realised his superpower was being able to work both sides of the aisle and persuade politicians from different parts of the spectrum to work together. But that meant he was having meetings with people like [right-wing US Senator] Jesse Helms, who famously dismantled the National Endowment for the Arts because of Robert Mapplethorpe’s photographs and made

Curiosity corner: The Edge at Shangri-La Studio, Malibu, California, February 22, 2023.

some terrible early comments about the AIDS pandemic. So, that was hard. But we understood the logic. And if you judge activism based on results, rather than it being some kind of attempted virtue signalling, then Bono was absolutely right. Bobby Shriver [Kennedy scion, co-founder of Bono's AIDS charity] says – and I don't remember, but I'm sure he's right – that I said, "Look, if you get this thing through, I'll meet Jesse Helms, I'll shake his hand, backstage." And that is exactly what happened. They got the bill through [US Congress], got this huge amount of money through for AIDS in Africa. And sure enough, Jesse Helms came to a U2 show and I shook him by the hand.

So it's a question of being clear-eyed about the ends and the means?

Yeah. If you can persuade a politician that they're not going to sacrifice their existing support but they will potentially add, that's hard to turn down. And Bono became very good, I think, at advocating on that basis. "Look, this will mean political Brownie points for you." But often that meant him being in the photograph (*laughs*). So that took a lot of courage on his behalf. Some people miss that – they just think he compromised his principles. He didn't at all. What he did compromise was his PR profile and his standing with the sort of fundamentalists who would never be open to receiving help from people they didn't agree with. In the end, I think facts bear out his approach.

Bono's book makes clear the announcement of 2017's *Joshua Tree* tour was made just weeks after he underwent heart surgery. Was that a little foolhardy?

Bono sees his physical self as an inconvenience, something he needs to get around – he's not necessarily prone to thinking about his physical well-being. But in that case, I think we all had the advice of his medical team about what was realistic. There was no way we would have done anything that would have put him at risk.

There were slight echoes of *Pop* there, when you booked a tour before finishing the album it was meant to promote.

Yeah, that was an example of hopeless optimism on our behalf. Our critical powers were not as good. Had we had another bit of time, *Pop* would have been… who knows? We might have written a few more songs, because that often happens in U2. Towards the end of a record you have all this creative energy. Anyway, we did learn. And we'll never do that again.

EVANS ABOVE

The pick of U2's Edge-centricity. By **Keith Cameron**.

THE POST-PUNK PARVENU

Boy

★★★★

(ISLAND, 1980)

The Edge considers U2's debut the album he'd be most interested in completely re-recording – "because it's full of so many amazing ideas, and we had so little time" – but it's impossible to imagine hindsight's wisdom fashioning anything to better the original's ecstatic angst. The gauche collective energy was stiffened by Edge's spartan guitar impressionism, as outsider anthems I Will Follow and Out Of Control heralded a new breed of guitar anti-heroism.

THE FUNKY FUTURE SHOCK

Achtung Baby

★★★★★

(ISLAND, 1991)

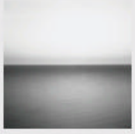
An act of artistic reinvention driven by The Edge's zeal to drag U2 into the future (or at least the present), achieved by rekindling their post-punk grounding in German machine music, via a foray to Berlin and reuniting with Brian Eno. The Fly and Zoo Station were new model variants on original-era U2 *sturm und drang*, while One saw Edge's ear for a chord sequence pull his band out of the deepest hole.

THE ODD ODYSSEY

No Line On The Horizon

★★★

(ISLAND, 2009)



This messy compromise between several different U2s began with shelved Rick Rubin recordings before stumbling through subsequent sessions that not even the combined production brains of Eno, Lanois and Lillywhite could magic into coherence. But *No Line*'s best bits belong to the quiet man on guitar: ratcheting up the torque on Magnificent; the hymnal, un-Edgey solo on Moment Of Surrender; and his ear-popping shred-out on Unknown Caller. More of that please, maestro.

Speaking to MOJO recently about your abortive recording session in 2006, Rick Rubin reckoned U2 "make tracks and hope they eventually turn into a song".

To be fair, we had a limited amount of time and a limited amount of material. But some of it, I thought was really promising. And Rick is not wrong, in that it's one of our techniques. We've many, many ways to come up with material and one of them is just finish some music, and then see what the melodic opportunities are. The caveat is, you can fool yourself. Sometimes you have a piece of music you think is on the way to becoming a powerful song. And, you can miss. But particularly these days, I'll work up really quite well-defined demos before we even attempt to do something as a collective. There's no rules. You've just got to be available.

In 2005 you told me: "We're not a studio band that tours. We're a live band that makes albums." Does that still hold true?

Mmm. That's who we are. We thrive on that communication with our audience. At the beginning of the composition of Where The Streets Have No Name, I was literally trying to place myself in the crowd. I'm a fan, I know what I would want to hear – so let me write that. But we have this love-hate relationship with the studio. Particularly Bono will avoid going into a regular studio at all costs, because he finds them very uninspiring places. So we will generally work in somebody's house, we'll find somewhere to work that really does not feel like you're in a place of work. And I get it. Music can't be work – if music sounds like work, forget about it. It has to come from a place of freedom and play and discovery and invention. One of the great things about working with Brian Eno is he completely gets this. So although we didn't use Oblique Strategies directly, Brian would have a real sensitivity to the degree of creativity going on in the room and if it felt workmanlike, he'd try and change things around.

So what's the next U2 album? I like the sound of "the unreasonable guitar record" Bono recently aspired to make.

(*Laughs*) Well, I would love that to be the next U2 record! The lockdown was a very creative period for me, just in composing music. I don't want to jinx ourselves… but there's a lot of great material waiting. I think the guitar is coming back. I really feel it. And I would like to be part of that.

Headline: "U2 guitarist would like to be the man holding the guitar"!

I'd like to be the vanguard of this resurgence of guitars! Don't get me wrong – talking to people I know who work at Fender, they're selling more guitars now than they've ever sold. But in terms of popular culture, there's been a drift away from the instrument, it would be fair to say. And I think that pendulum is going to start swinging the other direction. Because it's such an incredibly expressive instrument. The few bands that are using it well, it's still fresh. Doesn't necessarily have to feel like you've heard it all before.

Do U2 really have to care about the pendulum of popular culture? Can't you just do whatever the hell you want?

We do that as well (*laughs*). I dunno… To not have any ear for what's relevant within the culture is just being out of touch. You can do stuff that's completely against the grain, but you still want to know where the grain is. I think about it in terms of the flow of a river – if you're not in the flow, you're part of an oxbow lake. And I want to be part of the flow.

BROADWAY

That's Muswell Hill Broadway, of course: the birthplace, or thereabouts, of **THE KINKS**, 60 years ago. Time for rock's least orthodox band to help celebrate 10 of their key kompositions: songs of lust and loss, fragility and despair, that remind them of good times and bad. "The emotions are so powerful," they tell **ANDREW MALE**. "So varied."

Photograph by **MONTE FRESCO**

A THIN, DISEMBODIED VOICE UTTERS A SINGLE beguiling word: "Rashomon". It's a dark afternoon in the last week of an endless January and Ray Davies, calling from his headquarters in north London's Konk Studios, on a 'Hide Self' Zoom setting, is trying to explain the forthcoming 60th anniversary Kinks compilation, *The Journey*, the first to be selected by the three surviving members of the group.

Rashomon – Akira Kurosawa's 1950 samurai thriller in which a crime is recounted by four different characters, none of whom are telling the whole truth – is rarely cited as a model for curating a pop group's catalogue. But this is The Kinks and The Kinks do things differently.

"There's never been an officially sanctioned best-of before," explains Ray, "and the history of The Kinks is like Rashomon, so I also asked the others for their choices and reminiscences. I wanted this compilation to be something that had more interest to it than just the hits." Combining selections from Ray, brother Dave and Mick Avory, the group's drummer from 1964 to 1984, *The Journey*, or, to use its full title, *The Journey Part 1*, encompasses a decade-plus of Kinks songs, from their breakthrough 1964 single You Really Got Me to 1975's *Schoolboys In Disgrace* LP, where Ray shook off the shackles of theatrical rock and reconnected with the group's raw, rebellious roots. The tracks have also been divided by Ray into four thematic sections: a) 'Songs about becoming a man, the search for adventure, finding an identity and a girl'; b) 'Songs of ambition achieved, bitter taste of success, loss of friends, the past comes back and bites you in the back-side'; c) 'Days and nights of a lost soul, songs of regret and reflection of happier times'; and d) 'A new start, a new love, but have you really changed? Still haunted by the quest and the girl.'

"There has always been a narrative running through this," says Ray of the themes of his writing, "and when I write, well… I don't waste a song, really."

Born in Britain's R&B boom, The Kinks morphed from hit machine to psychodrama, with songs that were sad, satirical, sometimes inscrutable. Today, the trio have picked 10 of them to discuss in depth with MOJO, all from the first decade of their existence, all from *The Journey Part 1*, and all explored with remarkable honesty and openness. Or at least, as their enigmatic leader concedes, for the most part.

"Like the songs, it's best not to be too specific," says Ray Davies. "If you have a message, send it by Western Union. ➢

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MELODIES

Face to face: The Kinks (from left) Mick Avory, Dave Davies, Pete Quaife, Ray Davies.

Not like everybody else: (clockwise from left) The Kinks in 1966; Ray and Dave Davies keep their guards up in the studio; dandy Dave in 1967; Ray; Pete (left) and Mick.

"YOU HEAR EXCITEMENT, FEAR, A BIT OF MENACE"

YOU REALLY GOT ME

(Pye single, 1964)

TIRED OF WAITING FOR YOU

(Pye single, 1965)

RELEASED A YEAR apart, yet both written in 1964, these two songs perfectly illustrate the twin aspects of The Kinks and Ray Davies's songwriting character. You Really Got Me is forceful, almost threatening. Ray's sneering lyrics, somewhere between lust and disdain, and Dave's distorted two-note riff (created by slashing the speaker cone of his guitar amplifier) hit the edge of what was acceptable in pop. Whilst Tired Of Waiting For You is anxious, half gentle, half petulant, Ray's diction residing somewhere between lullaby and admonition. Both songs also demonstrate the actorly flexibility of Ray's voice, his ability to create characters, put on masks and move between identities.

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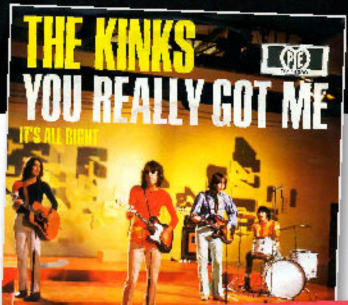


45NP 5056
TIRED OF WAITING FOR YOU
COME ON NOW
THE KINKS

RAY: Do those songs reveal two versions of me? I agree. You Really Got Me was all about discovery. We hadn't been in the studio very much, we weren't very experienced so it was all about exploration. We were so passionate about the sound we wanted. It's common knowledge that we made a version at Pye that sounded like Tom Jones so we went into another studio called IBC at Portland Place and I got my way, got the sound I wanted. But it was a team effort. Tired Of Waiting… we recorded for the first album but held it back because we wanted it to be a single.

Nobody taught me to write songs, so they became an emotional outlet for me. I internalised things. That was the natural thing for me. In Tired Of Waiting… you hear excitement, fear, a bit of menace too with Dave's guitar underneath. Is that the same person who is singing You Really Got Me? It sounds like someone having an identity crisis, doesn't it? But it took a while for me to acknowledge that. Because I never wanted to be the front man. I wanted Dave to be the front man. And maybe that's what you hear. But they liked my diction, my voice.

DAVE: We should mention [late Kinks bassist] Pete Quaife at this stage. In the beginning it was very much me, Ray and Pete. He was the bit of glue that held me and Ray together. We weren't very alike. I was like, "Fuck it, let's get it done! Right, we've done it!", but gradually I learned to appreciate the creativity.

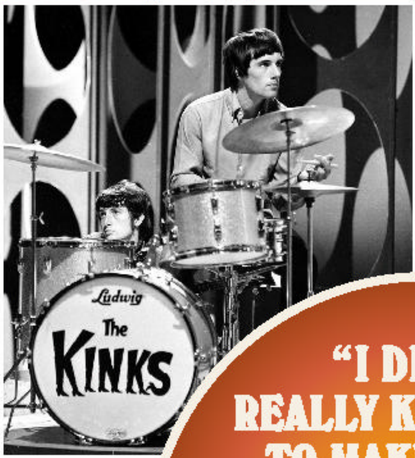
MICK: I didn't really know what to make of You Really Got Me at first. It was quite different from what we'd been doing but it was also quite different from what *everybody* had been doing. The riff and the words were quite straightforward so it was all about getting the sound and the feel of it right. I never saw myself as a rock'n'roll drummer, but luckily Ray was not writing what I would call rock'n'roll songs. It wasn't played straight through with a loud offbeat. It was a little bit more involved, a bit more subtle.

"JOY AND MISERY, ALL WRAPPED UP IN DENIAL"

WHERE HAVE ALL THE GOOD TIMES GONE

(B-side of Till The End Of The Day, Pye, 1965)

A COMPLEX song disguised as a simple one in which the narrator, deep in depression, longs for vanished yesterdays whilst admon-



ishing those who do the same. Beautifully constructed, in the way it flips back on itself, it was, as Ray has explained, a song written from the perspective of an older generation. But, coming in the wake of the group's disastrous 1965 US tour – which Ray was forced out on mere weeks after the birth of his daughter, Louisa – the song is steeped in dark autobiography, Ray's own depression, and his record label's demands for a hit. "Let it be like yesterday" could easily be Ray asking for a Beatles-sized flash of inspiration, while his vocal drawl definitely sounds like 'on trend' Dylan mimicry.

RAY: Am I doing a Bob Dylan impersonation? (*laughs*) Well, I hadn't thought about that. It might appear so, yes. I'm actually just singing it through my teeth the way my dad sang. I was still learning the craft, still challenging myself. There are elements of self-doubt, self-criticism in there. It's an impressionistic thing. A word, a sound that changes the image in your mind but it's partly me saying, "You're in a band. You got what you deserved," really.

DAVE: It was both joy and misery to be in The Kinks at that time. Joy and misery, all wrapped up in denial. Yeah. I couldn't really think of anything more profound to say. That song has its own voice. Its meaning shifts depending on who's listening. Ray had a miserable task, having to draw songs out of all that. It can't always be fun but it's got to be done. Yeah, I think Ray had a breakdown around that time but the thing is, life's full of breakdowns, isn't it? It's full of shit.

MICK: Well, there's a lot of truth in that song. Before we went to America in 1965, Dave and I had a massive fight [on May 19, 1965 at Cardiff's Capitol Theatre, following a huge scrap in Taunton the night before, Dave kicked over Avory's drum kit so Avory retaliated by whacking Dave across the head with his cymbal]. That didn't really help the spirit of the band, so everything was up in the air and we were confirmed to do the US tour and we couldn't step away from it. We went over and everything went wrong while we're on tour [no-shows, disputes over billings and payments, and a scuffle with a representative of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists would prevent The Kinks from touring America for the next four years]. Everything went wrong. Our manager Larry Page went home, we upset the unions, we were blacklisted. That's what we had to go home with. Pete Quaife and I stayed on for a few weeks after the tour, a nice place in Los Angeles. I enjoyed that bit. My first time out there. Sunshine and lovely cars. So different from England. Then we got back home and we sort of went underground.

"THERE WAS A PARTY GOING ON AND WE WEREN'T INVITED"

I'M NOT LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE

(B-side of Sunny Afternoon, Pye, 1966)

ON THE FLIP SIDE of Sunny Afternoon – a song that captured the country's cloudless Swinging London lassitude whilst hinting at darker times ahead – was a more overt example of how The Kinks were distancing themselves from the mid-'60s pop culture mainstream. A snarling pre-punk cry of nonconformity that undercuts itself lyrically ("But darling… [I'll] do anything that you want me to"), made more complex by Ray's decision to give this deep expression of autobiographical individualism to his brother to sing.

RAY: I'm Not Like Everybody Else was cast for Dave. He was the rebellious one. I suppressed my rebellion. But you're right. I listen to it now and I realise it *was* written for me, for my more internal anger and my sadness as well. The second verse: "And I won't say that I feel fine like everybody else." In 1966 there was a big party going on in the UK and we weren't invited. We'd stay at home and watch Match Of The Day.

DAVE: I'm sure a psychoanalyst would know why Ray gave me that song to sing. On the one hand it says a lot about his love for me but it also says something about the way he accesses and uses the information he gets from people. It's quite frightening, really. I actually think it's a song about Christ, and religion versus faith: "Confess all my sins like you want me to…" I'm a very emotional person and Ray is more retícent about his feelings but he was working it all out, all the time. We did boxing and boxing was good training for The Kinks: keep your guard up, a carefully placed right jab. Unfortunately I wish it had been more about flower power loveliness. ➢

"I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF YOU REALLY GOT ME. IT WAS DIFFERENT FROM WHAT *EVERYBODY* HAD BEEN DOING."
MICK AVORY

THE KINKS
TILL THE END OF THE DAY
7N 15981
WHERE HAVE ALL GOOD TIMES GONE

KINKS
SUNNY AFTERNOON
I'M NOT LIKE EVERYBODY ELSE
PYE

"MORTGAGES, RENT COLLECTORS… IT'S NOT SEXY"

DEAD END STREET

(Pye single, 1966)

LIKE CHARLES DICKENS, Ray Davies suffered from insomnia and, like Dickens, he would use his nights of sleeplessness to walk the streets of London and observe people. There is a Dickensian quality to Dead End Street and its tale of "strictly second-class" citizens going hungry in the midst of profligate Swinging London. Musically, it echoes Sunny Afternoon – that insistent two-beats-per-note descending bass line intro turned funereal and sombre with the addition of a colliery band trombone – but also devours it, whilst lyrically and in Davies's lamenting vocal it seems to chide the arch, playful Ray of the earlier song: artistic advancement as an act of self-loathing and encroaching isolationism. Ray was just 22 and, unlike his peers, was writing about debt, poverty, hunger and death.

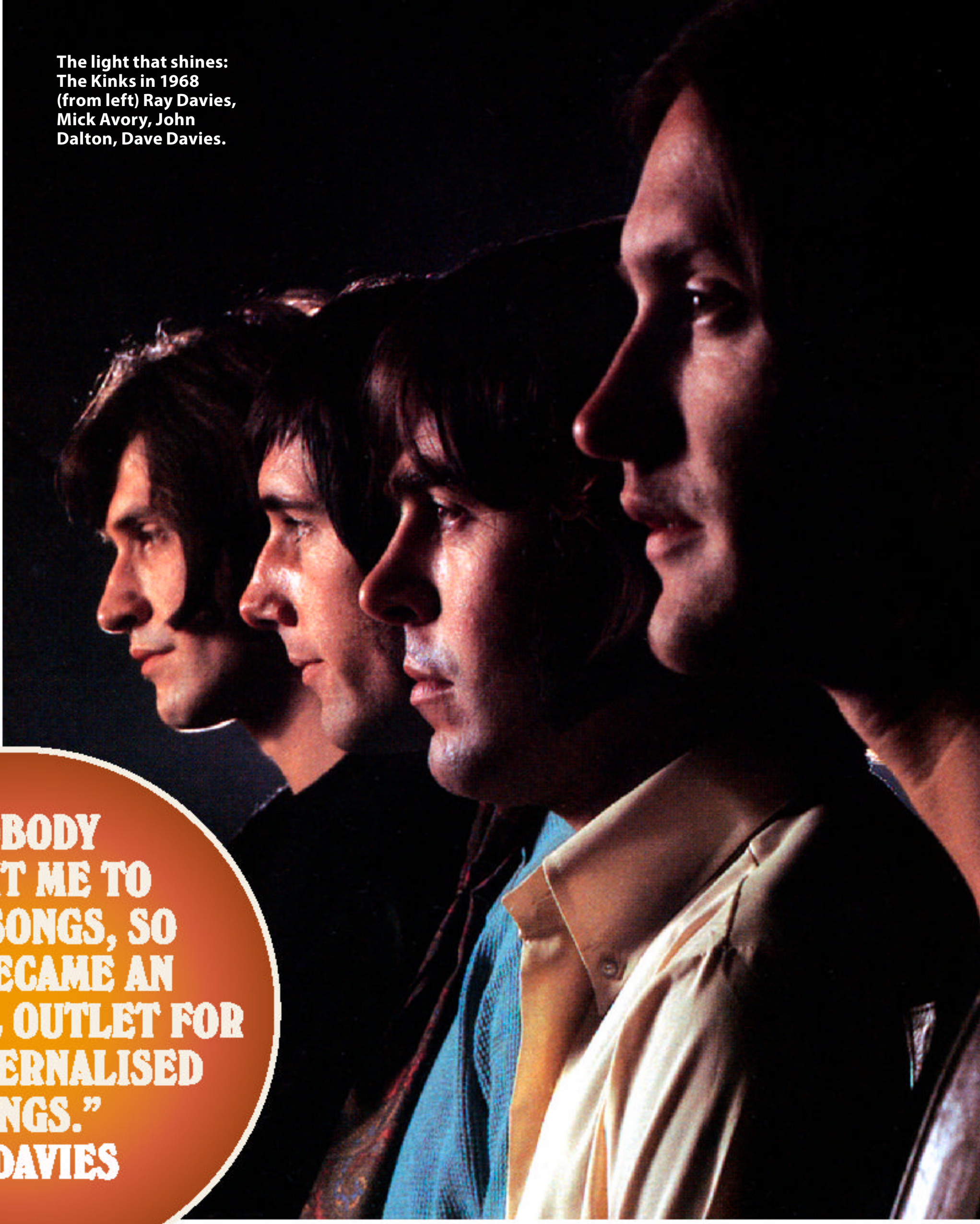
> "NOBODY TAUGHT ME TO WRITE SONGS, SO THEY BECAME AN EMOTIONAL OUTLET FOR ME. I INTERNALISED THINGS."
> RAY DAVIES

RAY: We didn't want to fit in. Like Groucho Marx, I didn't want to be part of a club that would let me in as a member. Dead End Street was pop music in a minor key. No one else was writing about those things, but you find your muse and the people who are interested can see the link running between them. It makes it easier to inhabit my songs.

We recorded Dead End Street once with Shel Talmy and he said, "That's it, done. Stick some French horns on it, boom." Then Shel went home and I said, "Let's try it another way." With the trombone we were trying for something more like Cab Calloway than a brass band. We were recording for my parents' generation but also generations that hadn't arrived yet. Putting this world in context for future generations.

It's a topic that was close to my heart, people struggling financially. We grew up in a very middle-class suburb but from working-class origins, and if you looked close enough it was there, people were living in fear, much the same as today. Britain was broke and I saw it around me. Mortgages, rent collectors… it's not sexy. The Rolling Stones weren't writing songs about mortgages.

MICK: Ray was always on Shel Talmy's shoulder, guiding him into what he wanted and he wouldn't let it go until he was pleased with it. But gradually songs needed different treatments, a different production and I don't think Shel was the best man to do it. With Dead End Street, Shel thought it should be played as more of a march, beaten out in time on the drum. Ray was going for a stranger mood. I'm playing a tom-tom, off-beat on the snare, whereas Shel wanted it played more "boom-boom" like the Dave Clark Five. Maybe it would have been Number 1 if we'd listened to Shel but it didn't suit the mood of the song. Ray was writing modern blues songs in a way and he didn't want a simple George Martin production but something more loose and subtle. When you listen to it you realise it's more than meets the eye.


The light that shines: The Kinks in 1968 (from left) Ray Davies, Mick Avory, John Dalton, Dave Davies.

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"RAY'S TRYING TO SOLVE LOTS OF MYSTERIES"

WATERLOO SUNSET

(Pye single, 1967)

BY 1967, RAY DAVIES had become even more of an outsider within the English pop landscape, longing to withdraw from the limelight and become a producer and songwriter. Simultaneously, his songs became a safe haven for the writer. Nowhere is this more explicit than on Waterloo Sunset. Beyond the lyrics, it's a curious song of hope narrated by a lonely, lazy, friendless agoraphobic. Those "la-la-laaa" backing vocals seem to mock and comfort our shut-in narrator, and Ray's vocals are delivered almost too quietly, as if the lyrics are too precious, too private and singing any louder might shatter them. It's now the defining sound of Ray Davies as a songwriter: removed from the action he's observing, lonely, alone, but content in his secret kingdom of song.

RAY: By 1967 the songs defined me. They gave me a personality. I don't talk very much to people. I never did. But I'd discovered songwriting. That was my only communication with the world. So my songs defined me. Was I creating a secret kingdom? Yeah. That's a very fair way of putting it. Ray's Kingdom. He's a cult.

It's funny you should mention the softness of my singing because when I first played them that song I didn't let them hear the lyrics because I thought the backing track should convey the atmosphere by itself. That's why Dave's guitar part works so well. It's *around* the vocal. Then you have the backing vocals, the different layers of sound then this quiet voice peeping over the top. I did have a cold as well.

The production is part of the identity of the song. The meaning of that song is bound up in the atmosphere it creates. It's a love song. It's about people I've met, people I know. It's also about people in the future, the people crossing over the river for a better world. What about the people that don't cross over? Well, that's my perspective. I'm the person singing, I'm the person staying behind.

DAVE: He's singing it as if he doesn't want to sing it, trying to solve lots of mysteries. That rhythmical guitar style on Waterloo Sunset was learned from a lot of the old '50s records. Sometimes these things emerge when you don't know what you're doing, when you're searching and you don't know what you're searching for.

THE KINKS
DEAD END STREET
BIG BLACK SMOKE
THE KINKS
WATERLOO SUNSET
DAVE DAVIES
DEATH OF A CLOWN
LOVE ME TILL THE SUN SHINES
PYE
THE KINKS
DAY'S
PYE
SHE'S GOT EVERYTHING

For the good times: (clockwise from bottom right) The Kinks, plus baggage, about to depart Heathrow Airport for their ill-fated 1965 US tour; Pete Quaife; on TV's Ready Steady Go!, July 31, 1964; Ray Davies in 1967.

MICK: It all fits into place on that song, everything we were trying to do, everything Ray was trying to do. Things peek through in the right places and it flows. You don't want any hard dynamics. I didn't try to do anything funny or flash. It doesn't call for that. Ray once said about my playing it never gets in the way. It's a bit of a backhanded compliment, isn't it? But he means it adds something to the song. John Bonham was a miles better drummer than me but maybe he wouldn't have suited Waterloo Sunset.

"I WAS ALWAYS APPREHENSIVE AT THE IDEA OF CLOWNS"

DEATH OF A CLOWN

(Pye single, 1967)

ENCOURAGED TO start writing his own songs, Dave Davies tapped into a deep wellspring of life-melancholy for this treatise on exhaustion, excess, self-deception, and the shallowness of the music industry. "I'd been walking around with a big stupid smile painted on my face for years," Dave wrote in recent autobiography, Living On A Thin Line, "[but] on the inside I was cracking up." The forlorn, out-of-tune piano intro perfectly establishes a mood of vulnerability, before the rousing chorus barges in with false, faltering bonhomie. Sadly, the success of the song just brought more terror and uncertainty for Dave and changed the dynamic within the band, as Ray saw his younger brother being fêted as the group's new breakout star.

DAVE: I never tried to analyse it. I could only write from how I felt. Death Of A Clown was a mix of four or five versions of myself, because I was always apprehensive at the idea of clowns – not sure if I should trust them. But on the other hand a clown can be a joyous thing. It's both, basically. I wrote Death Of A Clown on the same old upright piano Ray had demonstrated You Really Got Me on all those years earlier. I couldn't play piano then, I wasn't very good. It has that broken quality because life is broken. The older you get the more you realise how fucking broken everything is. But we need to show our emotions. You use whatever tools you have to understand the world around us and put it into some sort of shape.

MICK: At this stage [of The Kinks' career] I was more of a follower than anything, because the people involved in The Kinks were difficult people. Other bands were making real money in America. It didn't happen like that in Europe. It was more of a treadmill, even though we're popular in Europe. We were the number one band in Holland, you know. But it's not quite the same.

"I WAS SEEING THE WORLD PASS ME BY"

DAYS

(Pye single, 1968)

DO YOU REMEMBER WALTER

(US Reprise B-side, 1969)

BOTH SONGS, BOTH originally written for the 1968 LP, *The Kinks Are The Village Green Preservation Society*, are narrated by sorrowful characters and are about the going-awayness of things, a realisation that memory is the only thing we have, and do we really have that? Within the anthemic, valedictory verses of Days ("I won't forget a single day, believe me") sits a curious troubling aside, a moment of deep, insomniac fear: "I wish today could be tomorrow/The night is dark, it just brings sorrow, let it wait." Similarly, Do You Remember Walter, a song about old faded friendships and the deceptive haze of nostalgia, possesses a darkness both in the cruelty of the lyrics ("I bet you're fat and married and… always home in bed by half-past eight") and in the way the drums and piano mimic the sense of time racing away. Neither are easy songs to figure out. ➢

And all of the night: post-gig comedown, September 1964.

◄ **RAY:** With either song [the listener] is not sure what they're dealing with. I was trying to find the balance between oversimplification and overcomplication. Like a cryptic crossword. I'm taking the listener on a journey but the journey is inside themselves. The great thing I noticed about records when I was a kid was, *that guy singing could be me*.

The "I wish today could be tomorrow" bit in Days is called the pre-chorus. It's a four-bar phrase that takes the focus away from what the song seems to be about. It's a relief from the song, from "Thank you for the days," but it's also the 'because' part of the song. My favourite part. It's the reason the rest of the song exists.

Walter is a hymn to friendship based on a few real people. It's got that tough edge to it: "If you saw me now you wouldn't know my name." Tough songs played in a very gentle way. Credit to the band on that one for putting up with me while I was showing it to them. I guess you could say I was a bit of a pain but it was a very important subject and the crux of that album, *Village Green*, that preoccupation with things fading, with memories. I think that theme was there long before I wrote Sunny Afternoon. It comes from my family, from seeing things fall away. My sister Rose emigrating to Australia, how fleeting things are. Self-preservation. I'm not very good at that, at preserving humour, integrity, self. Also, when I wrote those songs I was seeing the world pass me by. I had pulled myself out of the world to write songs. I'm not complaining about the loss. The songs are *about* loss. And how to deal with it.

DAVE: What can you say about Days? I don't want to say suicidal but those lines are difficult. Life is about pain. It's lovely to see people happy, have a piss-up and a lot of fun, but you wake up with a hangover and all your mates have got problems and you've got a shit job and you can't get away from misery, sadly. That's why we need to be strong. In essence, Ray and I were strong but vulnerable. As the kid, I had to be up. I felt like I had to make people happy. I liked that feeling I had when I first got on-stage and the joy you feel when you see people happy because of something you're doing. That's key.

"THE PROBLEM WAS NEVER WITH THE KINKS BUT WITH PYE"

Kinks producer Shel Talmy remembers The Ravens, ragas, and rucks with the record label.

Strictly on the record: Shel Talmy tunes in for another hit single.

I FIRST met The Kinks when they were The Ravens. I was visiting Denmark Street and [the band's then manager] Robert Wace said, "Would anybody here like to listen to a demo?" I said, "OK, I'll listen." I liked it a lot. The songs were not nearly as sophisticated as what Ray would eventually write, but I could hear things. I thought, I can work with these guys.

I know you've read a lot of stuff about how we disagreed over the production of You Really Got Me but that's not how I remember it. We agreed on stuff right from the get-go. The first production we did was kind of bluesy, which I thought was great and would still have been Number 1 if we'd released it like that. But after Ray heard it he wanted to do a speeded-up version. The story is that I went to [Pye chairman] Louis Benjamin and he refused to pay for it so I said, "Screw you, *I'll* pay for it." So we went to IBC Studios on Portland Place and did it there. [NB: Keeping with the Rashomon theme, some Kinks histories state that it was The Kinks' management who confronted Louis Benjamin and paid for the re-recording.] From that point on I realised what a great group I had on my hands.

The first couple of singles we did [Long Tall Sally and You Still Want Me] were what Pye wanted us to do. I think we all knew they were not going to go anywhere. I know you've read that The Kinks had a volatile reputation but I never had a problem with them. Ray could be difficult at times, but bottom line, we got on fine. The way we'd work is Ray would come in with about a dozen songs, we would choose the best ones and I'd do the arrangements. Sunny Afternoon – I read about five or six bars of that and said, "That's the single!" That Eastern arrangement on See My Friends came about because I was recording with Jon Mark of the Mark-Almond Band, who'd just written a raga-influenced song, Baby I Got A Long Way To Go. I played it for Ray and the next day he came back with See My Friends. We couldn't find a sitar so we tuned Dave's guitar like a sitar and that's how that came about.

The problem was never with The Kinks but with Pye. Louis Benjamin had no idea about music. With a better label, one with more of an understanding of music, The Kinks would have been even bigger. The other problem is they got banned for four years from playing in America, which absolutely killed them. The good news is that Ray could write on virtually any subject, so he starts writing these sardonic songs about English society.

"THE FIRST YOU REALLY GOT ME WE DID WAS KIND OF BLUESY. IT STILL WOULD HAVE BEEN NUMBER 1 IF WE'D RELEASED IT LIKE THAT."
SHEL TALMY

In terms of Ray taking more control of production, getting more precious, he was always like that from the get-go. He wanted to be the producer and I understood that. Did we have a dispute over the production on Dead End Street? My memory has faded a little on that. I'll just say that I wanted the absolute best for everyone and that's what I did. I probably didn't make any new friends because of it. My primary motive was always to make the best record I could make.

As told to Andrew Male

All about the journey: Dave (left) and Ray Davies in the dressing room at BBC Television Centre, prior to performing Sunny Afternoon on TV show A Whole Scene Going, June 8, 1966; (far left) all ruffed up in 1964.

"A LOT OF EMPATHY WENT INTO THAT SONG"

SHANGRI-LA

(Pye single, 1969)

INSPIRED BY RAY's memories of his brother-in-law Arthur Anning, who emigrated to Australia with sister Rose, and recorded following the departure of original bassist Pete Quaife, the *Arthur* LP is both a 'pop opera' concept album about that emigration and a laying to waste of the alluring pastoral utopia of *The Kinks Are The Village Green Preservation Society*. The first single off the album, Shangri-La was inspired by seeing his own class move from tenement streets to "their own owned houses [that] all look the same." But whilst the song initially sounds snobbish in its mocking of the conformist suburban life ("Too scared to think about how insecure you are"), it's also a song of envy, sung by someone who has been denied the comforts and security of that boring family life with no worries and no cares.

RAY: Yeah. Maybe for "boring" read "loving". That's very important. It's a song written by someone who was finding it difficult to function within a rock band. The breadth of the material [on *Arthur*] was interesting, the freedom to express what you feel. Don't be afraid to show your feelings. Expose your weaknesses as well as your strengths. I was writing songs about the frailty of men at a time when men were afraid to show their frailty.

DAVE: You can view Shangri-La as a piss-take if you want, but a lot of empathy went into that song, a lot of empathy for the characters. It was about an out-of-reach world where you could steal away moments of happiness with your kids. You forget how good a defence family can be.

Getty (3), Courtesy Shel Talmy (www.sheltalmy.me)

"BOXING WAS GOOD TRAINING FOR THE KINKS: KEEP YOUR GUARD UP, A CAREFULLY PLACED RIGHT JAB..." DAVE DAVIES

LIKE WALTER'S piano and drums, our time with The Kinks has raced away. There's just enough left to touch on a couple of favourites: 1972's complex rumination on stardom, Celluloid Heroes, and the mournful calypso of Supersonic Rocket Ship, their last UK Top 30 hit of the 1970s, lonely records about retreating to fantasy worlds of no pain, written at a time of deep exhaustion. "I probably hadn't gone to bed for a week," explains Ray. "Emotionally drained. With Celluloid Heroes I had the feeling that something impending, something big was going to happen. You don't know whether it's positive or negative. Supersonic Rocket Ship is similar: exactly where is this ship going?"

The Kinks' 60th birthday celebrations include some quirky components. Music Heritage London are offering a sightseeing tour of Kinks-related locations. Rockin' 1000, the Italy-based collective who draw hundreds of singers and musicians together for ad hoc mega-shows, are adding a Kinks medley to their sets. In September, we're told to expect *The Journey Part 2*. Ray says that will "be more about interiors" but adds no further clues.

the KINKS
SHANGRI-LA
CELLULOID HEROES
HOT POTATOES
RCA
THE Kinks
RCA
Supersonic Rocket Ship
You Don't Know My Name

I ask Dave how it's been to look back over these songs – part of a dream setlist for the perfect Kinks concert.

"That concert can never happen," he says, "the emotions are so powerful. So varied. Excitement and depression and everything in between. I was saying to Ray the other week that with this and the other projects we have coming up, if it gets too emotional for me I will just have to leave. It's too much."

At least The Kinks story is less stressful to recount in 2023 than it was, at many points, to live.

"It's easier to look back because it has a kind of completion," Dave says. "You don't have to worry where you're going. Just enjoy it."

YOU GET WHAT YOU DESERVE

Dependable foil to "unhappy" Chris Bell and "unpredictable" Alex Chilton, mainstay of multiple incarnations of **BIG STAR**, **JODY STEPHENS** has kept the band's torch alight with poise and positivity, alongside roles as Ardent Studio CEO and one half of Those Pretty Wrongs. All this and nearly the drummer in Wings? "I'm a cup-half-full guy," he tells **BILL DEMAIN**.

Photograph: **MAUDE CLAY**

JODY STEPHENS IS TELLING MOJO about the time he could conceivably have joined Wings.

It was 1978, four years after the break-up of Big Star, and the drummer was on a visit to England, home of the pop music inspirations that had fuelled his now famously luckless band. Browsing in an antique shop in Rye, East Sussex, he found himself suddenly face to face with one of them: Beatle Paul McCartney, resident of nearby Peasmarsh, out shopping with wife and bandmate Linda.

As Stephens's shock and awe subsided, he told the couple he was looking for work. Later, he dropped off a Big Star record at the McCartneys' MPL offices in London, along with the phone number of his local friend, NME scribe Andrew Tyler. The next day, Tyler's phone was disconnected.

"So, we'll never know if Paul called!" Stephens says. "But I hadn't really played much drums for two years at that point, so I could've never passed anybody's audition."

We're standing on the front porch of a Craftsman-era bungalow, in Memphis's trendy Cooper-Young neighbourhood, on an unseasonably warm January day. Discarded Christmas trees line the kerb and a few lingering inflatables bob in front yards. Our plan to meet at Ardent Studio, where Stephens has risen through the ranks from an assistant to executive over the last 35 years, was upended by renovations. So we're doing our interview at MOJO's Airbnb rental. Stephens, with his still Wings-worthy hair, cuffed jeans and Ardent T-shirt, looks remarkably like he did in the '70s. A bit more grey, a few extra crow's feet. But it's difficult to believe he's just turned 70.

Just weeks before, he celebrated the 50th anniversary of Big Star's *#1 Record* with a sold-out, seven-city tour, leading a starry band of believers – Jon Auer, Mike Mills, Chris Stamey and Patrick Sansone – through note-perfect renditions of its powerpop classics. "The reason I keep going is because of this community," Stephens says, with a slight Southern lilt. "Not only the fans, but the players. When we're on-stage, we're all standing on each other's shoulders."

Wilco multi-instrumentalist Sansone says, "Being on-stage with Jody, hearing those drum parts and doing those songs is like playing Beatles tunes with Ringo. And the audience just want to celebrate this music and Jody." ➢

The Big Star in our eyes: Jody Stephens in 2012.

Maude Schuyler Clay, Getty

Hair apparent: Jody Stephens (left) shows Big Star bandmates Alex Chilton (middle) and Andy Hummel who's boss, 1974.

Stephens is the last living member of the original Big Star. Chris Bell died in a car crash in 1978, Andy Hummel and Alex Chilton both passed in 2010. We're lucky to have him.

"It's good that we made *#1 Record* when I was a teenager," says Stephens, "or I might not have been around to celebrate its 50th anniversary."

Radio City Big Star

BIG STAR
3RD

CHRIS BELL I AM THE COSMOS

Southern harmony musical companions: Big Star in 1971 (from left) Andy Hummel, Jody Stephens, Alex Chilton, Chris Bell; (left, from top) The Box Tops in 1969, with Chilton (front centre); Big Star's *#1 Record*, *Radio City* and *Third*; Chris Bell's *I Am The Cosmos*.

BACK IN 1970, STEPHENS had a few years in cover bands plus a run in a college production of Hair under his belt when he and fellow Anglophile bassist Andy Hummel formed a trio called Icewater – then Rock City – with precocious guitarist Chris Bell. "I was 17 and they were a year older, so I was just grateful to be included," Stephens recalls. "I admired them both tremendously, so I kept my mouth shut, and opened my eyes and ears to learn."

At the same time, Stephens remembers Bell "actively courting" Alex Chilton to join the band. Chilton, who'd already been through the pop stardom mill as a teen with The Box Tops, had recently returned to Memphis after trying on the first of what would be a career's worth of quick-change identities, as a Greenwich Village folkie. He caught Bell's trio at a local VFW Hall and liked what he heard.

"The first song we worked on as a four-piece was Ballad Of El Goodo," Stephens says. "That was a spiritual experience. Chris and Alex's voices together. And my part just seemed to materialise the first time we played it." Up to that point, Stephens had played no originals. "But all the listening to The Beatles, The Who and Stax – it kind of combined and poured out."

Unlike most young bands, Stephens says Big Star did not bond socially. "I was going to school, I worked a part-time job *and* I had a girlfriend. So there wasn't much time to hang out. Chris and Alex were the real pros who were dedicated to the music. Writing songs. Orchestrating guitar parts. That was their life in 1971."

In the outside world, the Pentagon Papers scandalised Washington, radio and TV ads for cigarettes were banned and Jim Morrison died. But in the soundproofed interior of Ardent, it was a full-time song-making operation. Thanks to John Fry, the avuncular engineer-cum-teacher who founded the studio, Bell and Chilton were handed the keys for unlimited after-hours sessions. The meticulous, detail-oriented Fry made sure his apprentices (and later, Stephens and Hummel) were *au fait* with mixing boards, mikes and multi-tracks. Fry believed in the band's songs, and mixed them, adding what Stephens calls the "sparkle and shine".

"John was like our George Martin and Geoff Emerick rolled into one," he says. "And having that ongoing access to Ardent created more opportunity for magic moments to occur."

Bell was tireless, working from dusk 'til dawn, layering parts, sprinkling in ear candy. "For me, I could lay a drum part down, then go back and see how it was working within the context of everything else – it was a luxury," Stephens says. "Big Star sounded the way it did because of John Fry, and because we could evolve in the studio as opposed to just a rehearsal room."

Or nightclubs, for that matter.

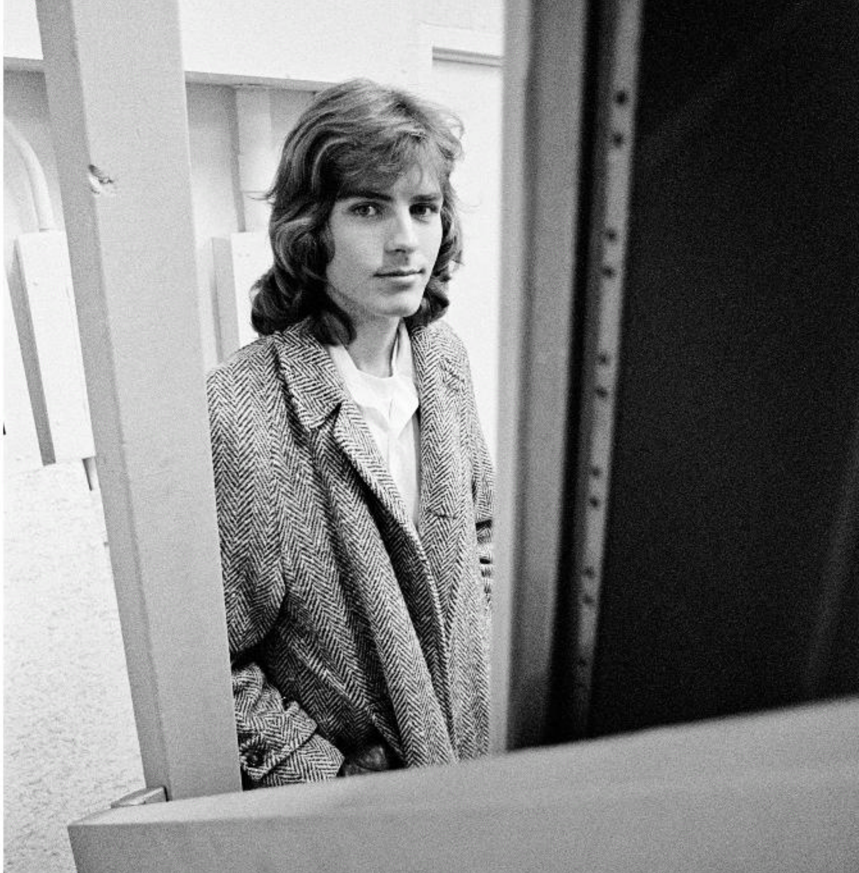
"We never had a proper manager, nor did we have a booking agent," Stephens says. "So we only ever did a handful of live dates as a four-piece." Imagine if The Beatles had skipped the 10,000 hours of Hamburg and Beatlemania, and started at *Revolver*. That's Big Star's *#1 Record*.

As an album, it was a love letter to the past and a roadmap for many bands' futures. But its mix of heavy riffs, burrowing hooks, yearning and quiet desperation, didn't chime with the dominant glam and macho rock sound of the early '70s. There were rhapsodic reviews, some radio play, but ultimately poor sales thanks to non-existent distribution. In November 1972, Bell quit the band.

"I was disappointed, and wondering what was going to happen," Stephens recalls. "My take is that Chris left not because of any personality conflict with Alex. He just didn't want to live in the shadow of Alex's fame from The Box Tops. Writers would say, 'You don't know Big Star, but you know Alex, because he sang The Letter.'"

"BIG STAR ALWAYS CAME ACROSS AS APPROACHABLE. I MEAN, IT'S NOT LIKE WE HAD ANYTHING TO BE UNAPPROACHABLE ABOUT."

JODY STEPHENS



Producer John Fry and (top) Stephens at Ardent Studio, Memphis, 1971.

© Michael O'Brien (3), Getty

But even Chilton would later admit he "joined Chris's band". Stephens: "Although Alex had a tremendous amount of input, Chris was still the captain of the ship."

The captain would spend his few remaining years chasing an elusive musical white whale, while fending off sometimes suicidal depression. "I think Chris's struggle was with his artistry and living up to his own expectations," Stephens says. "That's where his unhappiness came from, primarily."

AFTER BELL'S DEPARTURE, Bell and Stephens stayed in intermittent touch while the former was in Europe, recording what eventually became the posthumously released *I Am The Cosmos*. Stephens says he wasn't surprised when, in 1975, Bell went to work for his dad, who owned the Danver's restaurant chain. "Chris managed one of the restaurants, but he wasn't a kid that sat on his butt and said, 'Well, my father owns the business.' He wanted to excel. If Chris had a mind to do something, he wanted to do it better than anyone else. And with music, he had his heart and soul in it. I think his conflict and emotional challenges are right there."

Stephens pauses, then adds: "It's funny, after he left the group, Chris got into tennis and we played together. Not well, though Chris, true to form, had designs on doing something really serious and professional with it."

With the band's future uncertain and Chilton already inching towards his own project, Big Star was saved by their performance at 1973's Rock Writers' Convention in Memphis. The rowdy consortium, including Lester Bangs, Bud Scoppa and a teenage Cameron Crowe, was organised by the band's enthusiastic promotion man John King. "It was a paid vacation with free drink and food and music," Stephens says with a laugh. "But it was the only real Big Star audience we ever played to. They knew every lyric, every song. You might think, 'Wow, that's intimidating to play for rock writers.' But they were rooting for us, and that was a catalyst for the band to keep going on a second record."

For Stephens, *Radio City* marks the point where he locked into his style, as what Jim Keltner calls a "song drummer". While there are quotes from his favourites – a Ringo swing with bursts of Moon-like energy and Al Jackson finesse – it's a language of his own. Patrick Sansone calls him "the most underappreciated part of the Big Star sound," while singer-songwriter Matthew Sweet, who's guested with recent incarnations of Big Star and employed Stephens on his 1993 *Altered Beast* album, says, "He is one of the few drummers who really has his own personality, a unique feel. When he was playing on my record, after five seconds, it was like, Wow, that's the Jody sound!"

Stephens says, "I'd gone to this percussion class at Memphis State, which was wild experimental stuff like putting a straw through the lid of a drink, or blowing on a blade of grass. But they also taught rudiments." On *Radio City*, Stephens recalls he got a new kit, a Ludwig Superphonic, that had a voice of its own. "That shaped the way I played. Not to mention Alex's guitar playing. Think of the intro of O My Soul. The energy of it just launches like a rocket ship and clarion call. And as a drummer, you just answer the call."

Despite invisible hits like What's Goin' Ahn? and September Gurls (Stephens clarifies a mystery – the "Butch" in Chilton's lyric refers to a DC comics puppy dog), there were more distribution snafus, and record buyers failed to answer the call. Shortly af- ➢

Shining on: (clockwise) Big Star in 1974 (from left) John Lightman, Stephens, Chilton; the reunion band meet an excited fan backstage at San Francisco's Fillmore, 2002 (from left) Stephens, Jon Auer, R.E.M.'s Mike Mills, Ken Stringfellow, Chilton; Stephens at Ardent Studio C, with the kit he used on *Radio City* and *Third*.

“WHO KNOWS WHAT ALEX REALLY THOUGHT? HE COULD BE CONTRADICTORY JUST FOR THE SAKE OF BEING CONTRADICTORY.” JODY STEPHENS

≺ ter, Hummel left the band and the music business altogether. And then there were two, for what became Big Star's experimental *Third*, a fractured, downtempo treatise on Chilton's dissonant relationship with his girlfriend. “That album is like reconciling *Meet The Beatles* with Revolution 9,” says Sansone. “How can these things exist in the same world?”

Stephens, present on a third of the tracks, offers an analysis of Chilton's working methods at the time. “Alex was into recreational drugs and drink, so it was a dark period. His intent was to juggle things from beauty to kind of raucous and chaotic. On one of the really melodic songs, the upright bassist played this beautiful part, then Alex said ‘that's too good’ and went about trying to throw the notes off pitch. He wasn't being destructive. It was to guide the song towards what Alex was feeling emotionally.”

Producer Jim Dickinson and John Fry shopped the album around in vain. By the time it came out, three years later, in 1978, Stephens and Chilton were off on separate paths.

Stars collide: Jody and Andy Hummel, March 20, 2010.

THAT COULD EASILY HAVE BEEN THE END OF the story. But, like its astronomical namesake, Big Star emitted ghost light across time and space, long after its collapse. The light reached new generations of artists, inspiring young fans like Chris Stamey, Mitch Easter and Peter Buck to make cross-country pilgrimages seeking Bell and Chilton.

“Well, no one ever came looking for *me*,” says Stephens with a laugh. “But I get it. These guys were profoundly touched by what Chris and Alex created. They wanted to have a conversation. And Big Star always came across as approachable. I mean, it's not like we had anything to be *unapproachable* about.”

In the early ’80s, The Replacements, The dB's, Matthew Sweet, The Bangles and R.E.M. all built their retro sounds on Big Star DNA. “Hearing *#1 Record* was like hearing an American Beatles,” says Sweet. “It blew my mind.” “Some of loving Big Star was about geography,” adds Sansone, who's bonded with fellow Big Star fan and Southerner John Stirratt both in Wilco and their side-project Autumn Defense. “Being a sensitive Southern boy who loved British pop, to stumble across these records made by people who lived a few hours away was powerful.”

As these discoveries were unfolding, Stephens was looking for his next act. Estranged from Chilton after a falling out during *Third*, he band-hopped for years, but nothing stuck. Some of the music is worth seeking out, especially his collaborations with Memphis piano popster Van Duren, who sounds like Gilbert O'Sullivan minus the cardigan.

Finally, he went back to college, getting a marketing degree in 1984. For two years, he sold home burglar alarms. Then, hoping to break into radio ad sales, he asked his old friend John Fry for a letter of recommendation. The next day, Fry hired him at Ardent as a talent developer. “John was the father of my professional career,” Ste-

Carole Manning, Getty (2), Courtesy Jody Stephens

phens says. "For music, of course, and then on January 12, 1987, I started on the business side of things."

Meanwhile, Chilton, whose career path had veered from under-done originals to oddball covers of Dean Martin's Volare, to a period as a restaurant dishwasher in New Orleans, seemed to relish trashing Big Star to journalists. He said he didn't understand the fuss, calling the group's rabid fans "freaks and confused college kids… lonely and misunderstood, learning to play the guitar."

Stephens shrugs at it now. "*Who knows* what Alex really thought? He was sort of predictably unpredictable. He could be contradictory just for the sake of being contradictory. There was one interview with him in the '80s, where they mentioned Big Star, and he goes, 'You should really listen to those records, because our band turned some heads.' That's a pretty favourable statement."

AS NEXT-GENERATION CRUSADERS INCLUDING Teenage Fanclub, Elliott Smith and Brendan Benson continued to pledge their allegiance to Chilton and Big Star, Stephens stayed busy nurturing young bands at Ardent. "John set me free to go about the job as I wanted," he says. "It was all about creating relationships and friendships. And we had a lot of success in developing local talent and placing them with major labels, especially [Memphis Christian rock band] Skillet."

Then in 1993, two students at University Of Missouri rolled the dice on an impossible bet – a Big Star reunion. Chilton surprised Stephens by saying yes. Jon Auer and Ken Stringfellow from The Posies rounded out the line-up, and Big Star v.2.0 was born. That one-off gig led to nearly 20 years of occasional shows, plus two albums, *Columbia: Live At Missouri University* (1993) and the now out-of-print studio project *In Space* (1995). The records helped foster a steady relationship between Stephens and Chilton, without exactly enriching the band's legacy. "People had been living with our first three records a long time, so it wasn't easy introducing a fourth," says Stephens.

When both Chilton and Hummel passed in 2010, it left Stephens to carry on Big Star v.3.0 as a movable feast of friends and fans. "When we got together in the early '70s, we were all kids," he says. "And not really sure of ourselves. There were all these emotions and hormones raging. It's a different feeling now, because we can just enjoy the music for what it is, without carrying that teenage angst. For me, it's all part of the same thing, which is needing to belong, to be part of a musical community."

"Jody hung in there, carrying the Big Star torch," says Sweet. "And it was great to see the band finally get their due."

At the same time, Those Pretty Wrongs, his sunny-side-up duo with Luther Russell, has given Stephens three albums' worth of fresh creative energy. "It means the world to be able to make new music, and still be a contemporary creator," he says. "Luther is a great collaborator. Warm, accepting, a real cheerleader."

Stephens – often called the "nicest guy in rock" – is surrounded by cheerleaders. "I can't say it enough, he is one of my heroes," says Sweet. "I adore Jody," says Sansone. "And Big Star still checks all the boxes for pop music as art."

I ask Stephens if he ever dreams about his late bandmates. "It can be just kind of quick appearances, but yes, definitely," he says. Pausing, he then puts a characteristically positive spin on the story.

"At the end of the day, it all worked out. Of course, Chris died in an automobile accident in '78, but Alex wound up making a living off Big Star. He had that income from That '70s Show [a cover of Big Star's In The Street was its theme song], then I'm In Love With A Girl got placed in a Heineken commercial. That allowed Alex to be Alex, as free and independent as he wanted. Andy went on to create a family and have a great job at Lockheed-Martin. And I got to work with John Fry at Ardent and play with fantastic musicians."

Writers often call Big Star one of rock's great injustices, even tragedies, but that's not Jody Stephens's take. "I'm a cup-half-full guy," he smiles.

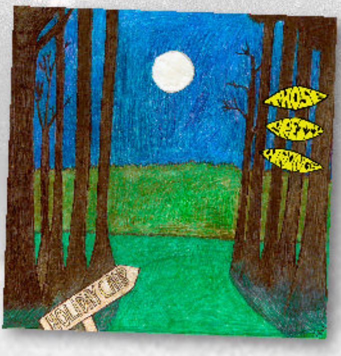
Pat Sansone tours the world with Wilco in 2023. Matthew Sweet is currently recording a new solo album.

All right now: Those Pretty Wrongs' Jody Stephens and Luther Russell.

THOSE
PRETTY
WRONGS
NO PERSONS

"IT'S GREAT TO SEE JODY HAVE A RENAISSANCE"

Those Pretty Wrongs co-star Luther Russell on scratching that Big Star itch in 2023.



"MY FIRST impression of Jody was, This guy is *too* nice, and, Who the hell am I to be hanging out with the drummer from Big Star?" says Luther Russell, LA-based multi-instrumentalist and the other half of Those Pretty Wrongs.

They met in 1991, and kept in touch over the years. Then in 2012, Stephens tapped Russell to accompany him on a few shows to help promote the Big Star documentary Nothing Can Hurt Me. "It was a tall order," Russell recalls. "But when we rehearsed, it was immediately noticeable that we had this vocal blend. Then it was a hop, skip and a jump to collaborating on a project."

The duo's third album, *Holiday Camp*, is an inviting blend of jewelled guitars, fragile optimism and wraparound harmonies. In other words, Big Star fans will approve. "We're definitely toiling in the same vineyard," says Russell. "But now that we've made a couple of records, I think we may have forged our own identity. But not one that Big Star followers would be put off from – it scratches the same itch."

The songwriting itch runs deep in Russell's background. His grandfather Bob, a lyricist, collaborated with Duke Ellington and Quincy Jones, and wrote standards across the decades like Don't Get Around Much Anymore and He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother. Russell's great uncle Bud Green, a Tin Pan Alley tunesmith, wrote Flat Foot Floogie and Sentimental Journey. Russell says, "The first thing I knew was Ringo doing Sentimental Journey, and it was like, Wow, there's a connection between my family and a Beatle! Later, Paul did Don't Get Around Much Anymore. That's a lot of legacy."

As a teen in the late '80s, Russell briefly had a band with Jakob Dylan, The Bootheels (Omnivore released their demos in 2021). There followed a stretch fronting roots-rock outfit The Freewheelers, on to a varied menu of solo albums, production work and co-writing with Weezer and Black Crowe Marc Ford.

While Russell considers Those Pretty Wrongs to be "a beautiful totem of our friendship and collaboration," what's even more meaningful to him is watching Stephens blossom creatively. "It's a lot different than just someone saying, 'Hey, will you play drums on this track?' or being seen as an elder statesman for something you did in your youth," Russell says. "It's just great to see Jody in his latter-day period have a renaissance."

MOJO PRESENTS

Seems you can't have a Grammys these days without AROOJ AFTAB, the transportational Pakistani singer melding jazz and Qawwali with spice of her own. But, with her star ascendant and a new trio album due, she's wary of pressure on her to 'represent'. "I'm not a pawn," she assures VICTORIA SEGAL.

Photography by **BLYTHE THOMAS**

Love in
Exile
AROOJ AFTAB
VIJAY IYER
SHAHZAD ISMAILY

IT'S A SIGN OF HOW MUCH AROOJ AFTAB'S LIFE HAS CHANGED IN THE TWO years since her beautiful third album, 2021's *Vulture Prince*, was released, that she now has the dubious luxury of a stylist.

"Some days he wants to put me in, like, a giant leather flower or something," she says. "At this point I'm just like, OK, fine, I'll wear whatever you want me to. So long as I can move around and sit, we're good."

Aftab speaks to MOJO from her Brooklyn apartment, with another opportunity for directional stagewear on the horizon: it's just days until the 2023 Grammy Awards, where the Pakistani singer and composer has been nominated in the Best Global Music Performance category for her song Udhero Na. She wrote the track as a heartbroken teenager in Lahore and she's pleased with its glittering second life; if somebody had told her younger self where it would take her, she says, "I would not have believed the time-traveller."

It's not her first Grammys, however. Last year, in an experience that oscillated "between excitement and so much anxiety", she was nominated both for Best New Artist and Best Global Music Performance, triumphing in the latter category with Mohabbat – in English: "Love" – a track Barack Obama placed on his Summer 2021 playlist. She became the first Pakistani woman to win a Grammy.

A synthesis of antique Urdu ghazals – poems of love, longing and loss that tremble between the spiritual and the secular – devotional Sufi song Qawwali and Aftab's work on New York's experimental jazz scene, *Vulture Prince* was a powerful recontextualising of ancient and modern, of new emotion and old scars. Aftab dedicated the record to her brother Maher, who died during its recording, but you don't need to know that to feel how this music makes space to sit with grief and absence, how Aftab holds pain and yearning close in her voice. It's an approach that endures on *Love In Exile*, Aftab's new trio project with "incredible" composers Vijay Iyer and Shahzad Ismaily. ➢

Blythe Thomas

"I made this music. It's coming out of me": Arooj Aftab, Brooklyn, 2022; (left) Aftab, Vijay Iyer and Shahzad Ismaily's forthcoming debut LP.

AROOJ AFTAB
BIRD
UNDER
WATER

arooj aftab
siren islands

Stepping up: ascendant star Aftab in Brooklyn; (right) first two LPs *Bird Under Water* (2014) and *Siren Islands* (2018).

AROOJ AFTAB
VULTURE PRINCE

Aftab performing on-stage at Primavera Sound, Barcelona, June 11, 2022; (left) third LP *Vulture Prince* (2021).

> **“A YOUNG PAKISTANI WOMAN PLAYING THE GUITAR AND SINGING THE WAY BOYS ARE ALLOWED TO – THAT JUST BROKE EVERYBODY’S BRAIN.”**
>
> **Arooj Aftab**

For British DJ Bobby Friction – the man who brought Aftab and billion-streamed Indian rapper Badshah together for a music-filled night out last summer – Aftab’s music runs deep. “As someone who is of South Asian heritage, I hear Sufi music, I hear Brian Eno in the ’70s, Hindustani classical music. Her instrumentation is definitely Western, it comes from that jazz tradition; it’s her voice, the longing in her voice, which is massively South Asian. If you’re listening to Qawwali music or listening to ghazals, you know that to be North Indian or Pakistani is basically to be drenched in melancholy.”

“I’m not surprised that her music has reached a wider audience at all,” says Judd Greenstein, co-artistic director of New York-based New Amsterdam records, who released Aftab’s second LP, 2018’s electronically abstracted *Siren Islands*, and *Vulture Prince*. (Aftab signed to Verve at the end of 2021.) “Listeners gravitate toward artists who have that kind of vocal magnetism and strength. She presents that – but in a soundworld that’s all her own.”

WHEN AFTAB WAS 11, HER PARENTS – TALENTED amateur singers and “proper liberals from the ’70s, you know… the cool kids in their generation” – moved their family from Aftab’s birthplace, Riyadh, back to Pakistan. In the ’90s, she explains, their native Lahore was “a very authentic and gentle city of gardens, with all these beautiful blooming flowers and a very poetic energy”, as yet unchanged by the freeway-building construction boom just over the horizon.

“It was just old families and friends, an old city that’s very interconnected,” says the singer. “It’s a sensitive, beautiful place where people took a lot of pride and joy in who they are as a people and as a culture. And we didn’t fit in.”

Starting again, says Aftab, was like being “told to join a school of fish, and just do what they do.” She made life-long friends, but the experience of displacement still affects her. “I think it translates into having this sense of not belonging anywhere, really,” she says. “Even who I am today – having the ‘no roots, no rules’ type of attitude, being able to create a crossover music – I’m not really a purist or attached to traditions from any particular place. It’s music that’s coming out of a very personal experience.”

Her distinctive career trajectory bears this out. In New York, Aftab’s circles overlap with Meredith Monk and Angela Davis: she would have played at Terry Riley’s 80th birthday celebrations if Covid hadn’t interfered (Riley’s son, Gyan, plays guitar on *Vulture Prince*). Yet Aftab also retains a fanbase who remember her as the self-taught teenage guitarist who kickstarted a new kind of Pakistani underground when her Jeff Buckley-indebted cover of Hallelujah went viral. Buckley, who was obsessed with Qawwali singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, would have appreciated the compliment.

“I was just throwing those recordings on the internet, sending them to my friends who would send them to their friends,” she says. “Now, there’s millions of Pakistani female musicians. But at the time, just to see a young woman very casually putting out music, playing the guitar and singing the way boys are allowed to – that just kind of broke everybody’s brain.”

Existing as a woman in the music industry is a topic she returns to later. “We still live in a strong patriarchy,” she says. “People just don’t really understand when a woman is doing something. They just want so badly for it to not be true. They’re like, ‘Who produced Björk’s record?’ Man, she did. She’s a fucking genius. She should be the President of Iceland. She should be on their currency, for fuck’s sake.”

WHILE INTERNET FAME VEERED BETWEEN “exciting and scary,” Aftab wanted more from music. “It really needed to be at the core of my being, you know? I wanted to study what goes on in the studio – the microphones, the wires, the cables. I was kind of a nerd as well.”

Aged 19, she left Lahore to study production and engineering at Boston’s Berklee College of Music, switching from the guitar curriculum to focus on voice. (“These are all just tools to get your

Blythe Thomas, Ebru Yildiz, Reuters, Getty (4)

Going global: (from left) Aftab, Tyler Darryl and Ambrose Akinmusire performing in the Vijay Iyer Band, NYC, August 14, 2021; (below) Aftab with her Grammy, 2022.

On-stage at this year's Grammys with (far left) Anoushka Shankar; (below) Aftab with US President Joe Biden at a reception in the White House, May 2, 2022.

point across, right? Just to get the language out.") It was another entirely new fishpond. "It was like I had gone to another plane and connected with an alternative universe version of me."

On graduating in 2010, Aftab surveyed the traditional career pathways for a young musician. "Will you go to LA and be part of the film-scoring world? Will you go to New York and be a broke jazz musician and do wedding gigs? Will you go on cruise ships? Or will you go to Nashville and be a songwriter? And I was just like, What the fuck!? These are all terrible options."

The singer settled for the least terrible: broke New York jazz musician. Aware she "didn't have the range at that time to be belting out Whitney" she made ends meet with audio engineering and sound editing gigs, at one point working at MTV.

Uneasy in US office culture – "you could be sitting next to the same person for five years and you're not really supposed to know them" – she would find her own work-life balance, and self-released her first album, *Bird Under Water*, in 2014.

"I was like, Oh my God, I have money and I am in my twenties and I never need to sleep," she recalls. "Running into Esperanza Spalding or Meshell Ndegeocello or Robert Glasper, just being super-immersed in the music industry at night, then getting the subway at four in the morning and coming home. Just being free, just being *able* to be free."

Yet Aftab knows how a certain level of success can change that. "You're not just an individual any more – suddenly you represent things. Like, 'Please make a short video talking about how great the relationship that you have with America is, being from Pakistan,' and I'm like, 'Why do I have to do this?' I'm not a pawn. You can't just make me do and say things because I am from a certain place."

DESPITE A STELLAR PERFORMance of Udhero Na at the Grammys (Aftab wearing a glorious architectural cape), the song is pipped by South African trio Wouter Kellerman, Zakes Bantwini and Nomcebo Zikode. Yet there's no taking away Aftab's greater victory. She has become the musician she always wanted to be and, an occasional indulgence of her stylist aside, her success has been achieved without compromise.

"It has taken me a long time to put out just three records," she admits, but even if she had been able to quit her day job sooner, she might not have wanted to move any faster.

"There's this school of thought that people have where it's like, 'The Earth is so old and music has travelled around and around for so long, that all of this music is mine to appropriate,'" she says. "And then there's the other school – where I end up – where it's like *none* of this music is mine. I have no right over any of it. I need to sit with it for as long as I possibly can and really, really wait until I feel that I made it. You know, I made this music. It's coming out of me."

GROUP THERAPY

Inside *Love In Exile*'s "DIY punk egalitarian style" jazz free-for-all.

THE FIRST TIME Arooj Aftab, Shahzad Ismaily and Vijay Iyer performed together was in June 2018 at New York venue The Kitchen.

"I remember when we came off stage," says Iyer. "Shahzad put his arms around the two of us and we all just sort of huddled for a while, initially just in silence. Then he said, 'I'm not sure what just happened, but I'd like to do more of that.'"

His wish was granted. Following more live performances comes *Love In Exile*, a record which features Aftab on vocals, Ismaily – who has worked with everyone from Yoko Ono to Bonnie 'Prince' Billy – on bass and Moog, and Harvard professor Iyer on piano and electronics.

"We booked a studio in Manhattan with an engineer that Arooj had worked with for *Vulture Prince*, split the cost three ways in a kind of DIY punk egalitarian style and went in that day," recalls Ismaily. "It was like a classic old jazz style record, where it [took] like maybe four or five hours."

The title, says Ismaily, "is a very beautiful phrase that speaks not only to the movement of people in and out of their countries of birth but also the exile we can feel within ourselves. That's how I end up experiencing it, because around the time of recording, I was going through a very painful separation."

For Aftab, it was about her "self-exile" from Pakistan "to find the right environment for my work to thrive" while Iyer speaks of the experience of diaspora. "You know that literally means 'being scattered', right? But the other thing about it is finding each other."

In *Exile*: trio (from left) Aftab, Vijay Iyer and Shahzad Ismaily find each other.

ain't it acr punky now

A CERTAIN RATIO's frosty Factory funk (and shorts) split the tribes of UK post-punk. But history and LCD Soundsystem were on their side. It's over 40 years since their first single came in a "special limited edition of 1,000 on poor quality vinyl," but some things haven't changed. "We're all crazy bastards, obviously," they assure **ANDREW PERRY**.

Portrait by **KEVIN CUMMINS**.

DONALD JOHNSON HAD JUST FINISHED HIS SHIFT as a baggage handler at Manchester Airport when the man off the televison came knocking on his door. He'd had a cup of tea watching *Granada Reports* on ITV, and here, 40 minutes later, was its anchorman, Tony Wilson, on his doorstep in Wythenshawe.

The garrulous presenter duly sat in Johnson's kitchen and explained how a band on his Factory record label needed a drummer, and he'd been advised by Toby Tomanov from Manc alt-popsters Ludus that Donald was the man for the job.

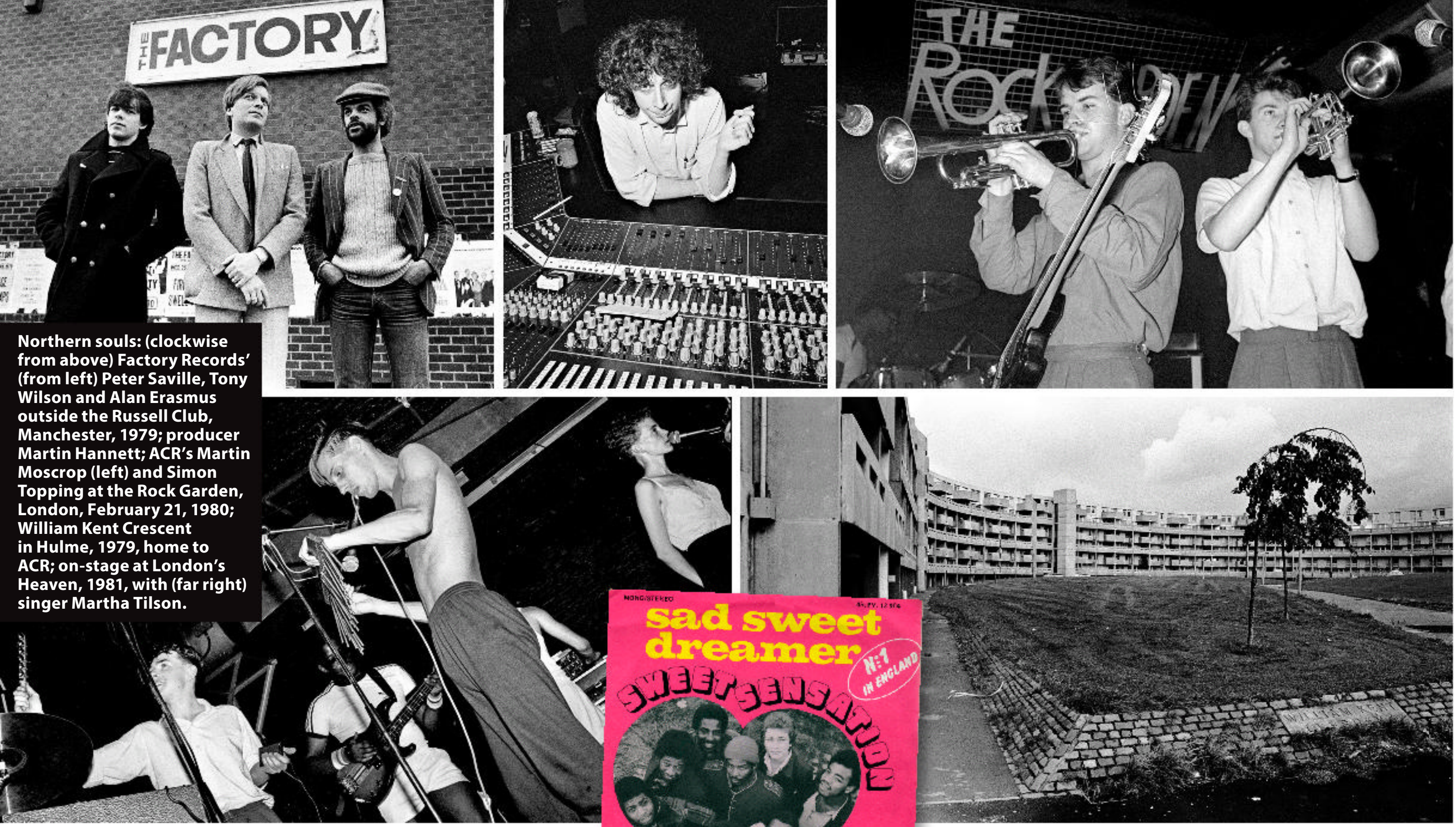
It was summer 1979, and one of Wilson's acts, Joy Division, currently ruled the indie charts with a debut LP, *Unknown Pleasures*, already lionised as a post-punk milestone. This other lot, A Certain Ratio, were embryonic. In May, he'd released the drummerless group's debut single, All Night Party, its sleeve stickered with the declaration, "Special limited edition of 1,000 on poor quality vinyl," and perhaps unsurprisingly he couldn't give them away.

"At that point," concedes guitarist Martin Moscrop, 42 years later, "we couldn't play our instruments. We were just making a racket, really. Punk had happened very fast, and quickly became commercialised and rubbish, so we wanted to do something the opposite of punk, which was why we were listening to Brian Eno, Kraftwerk and The Velvet Underground. Because ➢

SPECIAL LIMITED EDITION
OF 1,000
OF POOR QUALITY VINYL

Kevin Cummins/Getty

All night party people: A Certain Ratio in 1983 (from left) Donald Johnson, Jeremy Kerr, Martin Moscrop and Andy Connell; (left) 1979's debut single.



Northern souls: (clockwise from above) Factory Records' (from left) Peter Saville, Tony Wilson and Alan Erasmus outside the Russell Club, Manchester, 1979; producer Martin Hannett; ACR's Martin Moscrop (left) and Simon Topping at the Rock Garden, London, February 21, 1980; William Kent Crescent in Hulme, 1979, home to ACR; on-stage at London's Heaven, 1981, with (far right) singer Martha Tilson.

sad sweet dreamer
N:1 IN ENGLAND
SWEET SENSATION
sure thing, yes i do
ENO
FAC 2
A FACTORY SAMPLE

≺ we weren't musicians, we couldn't really copy those people, but that meant we didn't sound like anyone else. Then we started getting into funk, so we asked Tony to find us a funk drummer."

Unlike them, Johnson had grown up in a seriously musical household: in the '60s one of his elder brothers, Keith, played bass in Manchester soul combo, Sweet Sensation, and by the early '70s he'd passed that role onto middle sibling Barry, who lucked out when, in 1974, the band topped the UK singles chart with the Philly-inspired Sad Sweet Dreamer.

While weaned on Tower Of Power and Stanley Clarke, young Donald was very much on the Manc post-punk scene. As he and Wilson talked, they realised he'd jammed at a youth club with one of Wilson's first signatories, The Durutti Column's Vini Reilly. He also knew Joy Division's manager, Rob Gretton, who'd first spotted the four-man ACR grinding away at Band On The Wall.

So, Johnson "agreed to Tony's vibe," and soon found himself at a rehearsal space in Underbanks, Stockport, trying to break into the churning noise that A Certain Ratio had been creating hitherto without percussive input.

"They were all super shoegazers," he remembers, "and wouldn't even make eye contact with me – although, they said they were into P-Funk. Like, *really*? As I tried to play along, I realised they were playing chords and rhythms which sat in the drum space, like ching-ching-chacca-cha-ching-ching-chacca… And they didn't even know it! I told them, 'Just keep playing, and I'll somehow shoehorn myself into this stereo wall of echoness around me.'"

In the ensuing minutes, ACR found their sweet spot. Laughs bassist Jez Kerr, "We were all looking at each other, going, 'Fuckin' 'ell!' because Donald was technically really brilliant compared to where we were at, and suddenly everything just clicked. It was like, in that moment, 'Eureka! Punk-funk is born!'"

In the decades that followed, A Certain Ratio's staunchly Lancastrian tilt at funk – not to mention other pan-global musical strains, including samba, house, jazz and dub reggae – has never landed them a hit to rank alongside Sad Sweet Dreamer, but much like the Velvets and Eno (their name was lifted from The True Wheel on 1974's *Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)*), their influence would extend to both sides of the Atlantic and stretch from the '70s to the 2000s, touching Talking Heads (ACR would hip David Byrne to Parliament-Funkadelic) and LCD Soundsystem (mainman James Murphy would insist potential bandmates dig ACR's 1981 single Do The Du (Casse)).

Rarely absent since 1979 and still preposterously ungarlanded, Johnson, Kerr and Moscrop are currently in another purple patch, with an album, *ACR Loco*, released by Mute in 2020, and another upcoming. Entitled, with characteristic perversity, *1982*, it sums them up: unpredictable, hard to pinpoint, but ever forward-thinking.

LOITERING OUTSIDE A THREE-storey Victorian pile at 86 Palatine Road in leafy West Didsbury, Moscrop and Kerr are reminiscing about the days when Factory's office was located in the first-floor flat, which belonged to Wilson's junior partner, Alan Erasmus.

Kerr earned a small fee here circa January '79 for assembling a thousand copies of the label's introductory double seven-inch compilation, *A Factory Sample*. Each one took 10 minutes to glue together and bag up, he says, not least because "we'd write messages inside the folds, like 'Joy Division are shit – ACR are great'" – even though A Certain Ratio weren't actually featured on it. Moscrop, meanwhile, would routinely raid the stock room at the back: one time, he stole a hundred Christmas flexi-discs and sold them in London for £5 each. "You'd get a lot more for 'em nowadays, of course," he grimaces.

The homespun creative teamwork and unmonitored draining of resources are all part of Factory's legend, and ACR were in the thick of it almost from the beginning. The group was initiated in 1978 by two long-since departed members, Simon Topping (vocals) and Pete Terrell (guitar), whom teenage Manchester United trainee Kerr witnessed making ghastly Throbbing Gristle-esque noises

Kevin Cummins/Getty (3), Getty, Justin Thomas

A Certain Ratio
To Each...
A Certain Ratio
Sextet

To each their own: A Certain Ratio, 1980 (from left) Donald Johnson, Simon Topping, Martin Moscrop, Jez Kerr, Peter Turrell; (right) 1981's *To Each*... and '82's *Sextet*.

> **"They were all super shoe-gazers. Although they said they were into P-Funk. Like, *really*?"**
> **DONALD JOHNSON**

with an oscillator at Pips Discotheque. He duly insinuated himself, joining the band and moving into their flat in Hulme. Moscrop, poached from glam-punks Alien Tint, lived nearby.

Hulme, before heroin swept through its notorious Ballardian council blocks – the Crescents – in the early '80s, was a low-rent, multi-cultural area, crawling with students and creatives. Wilson cannily established his night, The Factory, right there on Royce Road, at the Caribbean-run Russell Club. On Rob Gretton's recommendation, the four-piece ACR 'auditioned' for Wilson at the Russell, and after Johnson's induction would stumble across the street to catch every Factory gig, or to open shows themselves, as they did for Magazine and Public Image Ltd.

While inspired by other post-punk acts they saw there, including Wire, Pere Ubu and – making the strongest impression – funk-and-dub-adjacent Bristol agitators The Pop Group, ACR were discovering a far wider spectrum of music.

"The whole of Hulme was tripping," says Moscrop. "We used to drop a tab and walk into the city centre to this black music club, Legends, and hear really hot jazz, funk and electro. The clientele was predominantly black males and white females, with us as the token white guys – on acid! We'd get quite a bit of attitude, because we looked so out of place."

ACR were also voracious vinyl junkies. Says Moscrop, "Yanks Records [a bargain basement briefly staffed by young Steven Morrissey] sold cut-outs and deletions, and you could get Brazilian records, and American jazz and funk records, all brand new for 99p. Once a week we'd buy 10 albums, go home and soak it all up, then try and make our own interpretations."

By November, the newly minted quintet were starting to assimilate these unusual influences, when Wilson, also their manager, landed them six last-minute dates supporting Talking Heads.

"After the first gig, their front-of-house sound engineer described us as 'like a fire in a pet shop,'" smirks Moscrop. "We used to tune up by ear, so we were all slightly out of tune with each other. Tina Weymouth [Heads bassist] got us backstage, and said, 'Right, we need to sort you guys out!' They had this electronic tuner, which we'd never even seen before. They really looked after us."

Later that month, Factory recorded ACR's set at London's Electric Ballroom and in early 1980 released seven live tracks, coupled with seven studio demos, on a fancy cassette sheathed in a see-through pouch of varying colours, all designed by in-house art guru Peter Saville.

Saville's next 12-inch single sleeves for ACR – stark, featuring expanses of white and microscopic credits – left the same impression as the band themselves: cool and aloof. While their "post-modernist funk" was favourably reviewed, their interviews were prickly, even NME's Paul Morley, a Factory acolyte, frustratedly noting that they were "not chatterers".

"We were very insular, as a band," says Kerr, their most outgoing survivor. "We never even talked to each other. We were on a direction that nobody else was going down, and it wasn't discussed at all. That was the beauty of it: it just happened."

Meanwhile their dour vibe and bleak sound were memorably satirised in Manchester fanzine City Fun, with the conclusion, "A Certain Ratio make Joy Division look like Monty Python."

THE DRIVE-THRU McDONALD'S IN SALFORD'S HIGHER Broughton neighbourhood is another site rich in ACR lore. Here stood the Rialto cinema, whose adjoining rooms were let out as rehearsal spaces, one of which they shared through winter '79-'80 with Factory's flagship band.

They'd known Joy Division since their pre-Factory days as Warsaw, when both groups would get their gigs through Frank The Hippie at the Manchester Musicians Collective. Then, once Ian Curtis's crew started taking off locally, ACR would often open for them. Moscrop pulls into the McDonald's car park to show MOJO a Kevin Cummins photo taken in the Rialto space, noting, "If you look at the floor, it's pretty dingy, like a dirty dungeon."

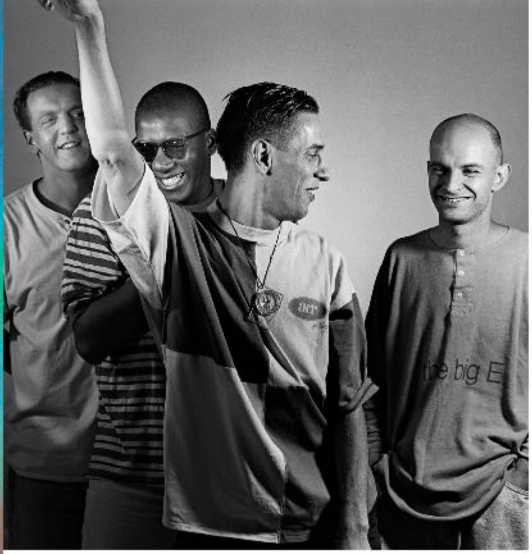
"Joy Division always shared their gear with us," adds Johnson. "On-stage, Ian was kind of laid-back one second, frenetic the next, and at the time I could never understand it – how do you go from nought to 60 in no time, then suddenly have that cool voice again? He got persecuted sometimes. There were often people shouting, 'You can't sing!' and our singer, Simon, got it the same."

With Curtis and Topping's moody, uncomfortable baritones to the fore, Factory's two main bands seemed umbilically linked. But in early 1980, as Joy Division's star rose higher, they moved out of the Rialto. ➢

Daniel Meadows (www.caferoyalbooks.com/england/daniel-meadows-factory-records-19791980)

Endless flight: (clockwise from above) ACR shacking up on Channel 4's The Tube, 1986; passing the acid test in 1989 (from left) Tony Quigley, Johnson, Kerr, Moscrop; (below) in 2019 with Denise Johnson at The Voodoo Rooms, Edinburgh.

> "We were trying to play like Flora Purim and Airto, with a dole-ridden Mancunian industrial edge."
> JEZ KERR



< "They'd get pissed off with us because their gear had moved, or the snare-drum skin might be broken," Moscrop recalls. "There was a butcher's on the corner, and Hooky went over and bought a pig's head. He came back and put it right in the corner where it was dark, took the fuse out from the lights, and stuck it in the pig's mouth, so when we next arrived, the lights were all off, and we had to scratch around until we found the fuse."

Moscrop pauses. "They were all piss-takers, and Ian was possibly the biggest japer of all, before his epilepsy and depression really set in."

Curtis's May 1980 suicide sent Factory's world into shock. One of the worst affected was Simon Topping, who, says Kerr, "knew Ian best". But ACR were already on a divergent path, and when Wilson sent them to New York for three weeks that autumn to record their debut album proper it was a visionary move. "Tony could see where our listening was going," says Moscrop, "and he knew it was blowing up there with every type of music imaginable, so he put us in this loft in Tribeca, hoping it would all rub off on us, and it really did."

The NYC aural delights they savoured would include Afrika Bambaataa, Puerto Rican flautist Dave Valentin, Latin drum circles in Central Park and, Kerr recalls, a Brazilian samba school. "The band came through the audience from the back, all hammering away on their drums, and we were like, 'What the fucking hell is this?' We'd hear all this early hip-hop, too, from DJs like Frankie Crocker on WBLS. Mind-blowing!"

ACR played their own East Coast shows, one at Manhattan's super-hip Hurrah club supported by funk sisters ESG. By day, they were holed up in New Jersey's Eastern Artists Recording Studios with Wilson's wayward production favourite, Martin Hannett, who'd neared genius with the Flight 12-inch's cavernous dub-funk, but who struggled to match it without the gadgetry he relied on back at Stockport's Strawberry Studios.

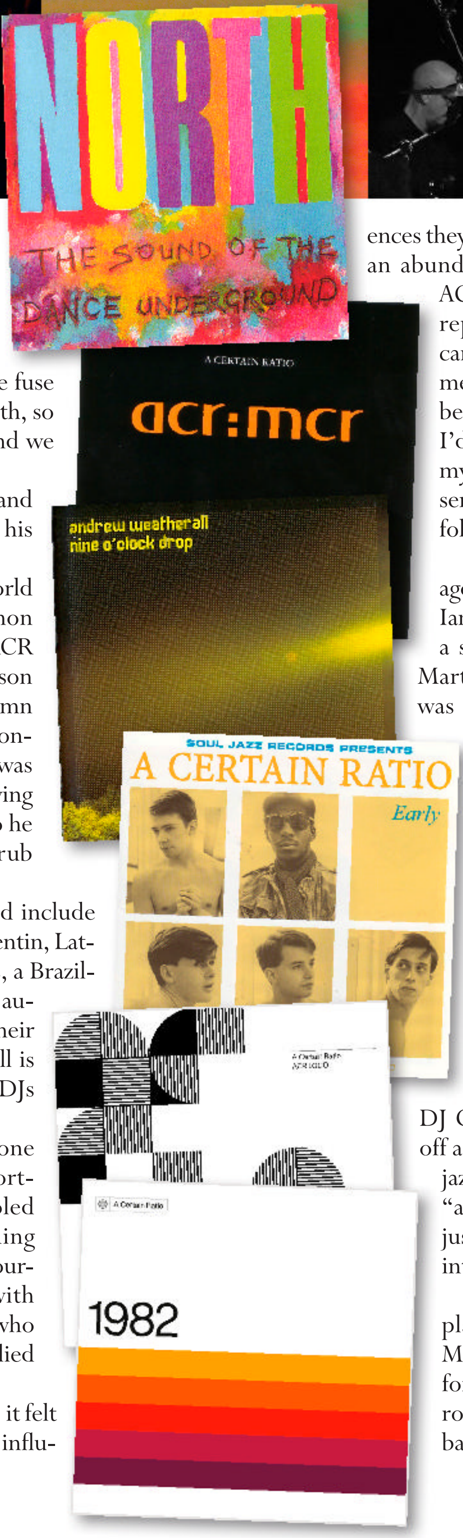
By the time *To Each…* came out in May 1981, it felt flat and, to the band themselves, obsolete – the influences they'd absorbed in New York had already shaped an abundance of new material. At the same time, ACR appeared to be lightening up: they'd replaced their early demob look, first with camo gear, then shorts. "That one came from me," clarifies Johnson, "because early on we'd be in these tiny clubs, and sitting at the back I'd have lights right next to my head, frying my face. I needed to cool down, so my trousers got shorter, and eventually the other guys followed suit."

Internally, however, Topping continued to agonise over persistent vocal comparisons with Ian Curtis. On *Sextet*, released in January 1982, a singer Kerr had befriended in New York, Martha Tilson, voiced most tracks. The band was collectively firing on crisp beats, slap bass and blasts of trumpet, but when Tilson returned home, they were properly stuck for a singer.

"We were falling out," reflects Kerr, "and it was breaking up with Simon. He didn't like the pressure of being the singer and moved to New York to get into percussion." Kerr dutifully replaced Topping on vocals. His style was smoother, more natural, but, he admits, "I soon totally understood where Simon was coming from."

ACR's fusions were breaking new ground. They were thrilled when Legends DJ Greg Wilson aired samba romp Skipscada off a *Sextet* white label. "The punters were doing jazz-dancing to it," Moscrop mistily enthuses, "and to us that was an amazing barrier we'd just got through, going from the indie market into funk, jazz-funk and soul."

Returning to New York in late 1982, ACR played the Danceteria, supported by rising Madonna Ciccone, whom Johnson barked at for trying to commandeer the whole dressing room. In the UK, however, there was push-back from their early adherents. "All the rain-



Tom Sheehan, Paul Husband, Shutterstock, Alamy

coat brigade who liked the darkness at the beginning were like, 'What the fuck are they doing?'" says Kerr. "We were trying to play like Flora Purim and Airto, with a dole-ridden Mancunian industrial edge, but they just thought we were shit now because we'd gone all jazzy and multi-cultural. We lost a lot of those people."

RELATIONS WITH FACTORY, EVER FRACTIOUS, soured over distribution and royalties, and when Wilson relinquished his management duties, ACR received a letter from the Inland Revenue saying their accounts were under investigation, because they hadn't paid any tax going back to 1980 – a common problem amongst the label's acts, who famously had no contracts, and dealt with Wilson on a handshake.

Recalls Moscrop, "I said to the investigator, 'Listen, we were told that all our tax was being paid.' He said, 'What's this bank account called The Movement Of The 24th January then?' I said, 'Oh, that's Tony Wilson's bank account for all his management business.' I'm not sure if that got Tony in deep water or not, but it got us off a massive tax bill."

Four albums in and now without a deal, they were rescued by Madchester. When acid house hit, Factory's modernist nightclub folly, The Haçienda ("our local"), went overnight from "empty and rather chilly to a sweatbox", and ACR embraced the new sound as heartily as any, with Moscrop collaborating on a track for Deconstruction's 1988 compilation, *North – The Sound Of The Dance Underground*. In that favourable climate, they secured a major deal with A&M, who promptly blew £750,000 on posh studio time and producer Julian Mendelsohn, hot off Pet Shop Boys' *Actually*.

"We went into it thinking, 'We'll have a hit!'" says Moscrop, "and we wrote some good songs, but everything took ages and the label were on a downward trajectory, making cuts. We used to call them Ah & Um. With our advance, we bought a mountain bike each, while all the other bands signing major deals were buying cars. We sank the rest into building a studio in Ancoats, and then charged A&M for studio time whenever we used it."

When even 1990's excellent, electronically charged *acr:mcr* stiffed, they were dropped. Returning to the Factory fold, ACR joined Rob Gretton's stable, Robs Records.

"It was a happy period," says Moscrop. "We could do whatever we wanted, and Rob kept us alive. Every time we had the bailiffs round, he used to give us money. He was a real friend and mentor, so when Rob died [in 1999], we called it a day. We felt a bit lost."

At that point, ACR's legacy was anything but secure, but transatlantic interest was growing in post-punk's more danceable excursions, piqued by a compilation selected by DJ Andrew Weatherall, called *Nine O'Clock Drop*, which featured saturnine *Sextet*-era cut Waterline. The Soul Jazz label duly put together an ACR retrospective, *Early*, and asked them to play a London gig to promote it.

"Donald, Martin and I were all that was left," says Kerr, "so the three of us had a rehearsal. Before that, we'd been going out with Akai samplers and all this gear, but instead we tried playing Do The Du, just us three, and it was like we were 17 again. We looked at each other and said, 'Fucking hell, what were we doing with all that gear? Just us doing it is *the* shit!'"

Thereafter the ACR trio, still minus an out-and-out frontman but augmented by saxman Tony Quigley and ex-Primal Scream co-vocalist Denise Johnson, gigged a few times a year, says Kerr, "when we were invited, and it was good money," until 2018 when Mute intervened to unleash vinyl reissues of their back catalogue.

MOJO's guided tour to ACR's Manchester ends emotionally at a Hulme memorial mural for Denise, who passed unexpectedly in 2020. After that year's comeback proper with *ACR Loco*, the first of three EPs showcased Denise ad-libbing over valedictory lockdown jams, and they say "the floodgates of creativity opened from there," to the point where *1982* – that title celebrating the pivotal year of *Sextet* – is but the first of three long-players fully mapped out.

"We've still got the vibe that we had 40 years ago," concludes Kerr, "but we're a lot older now, so hopefully there's a bit more common sense. Well," he corrects himself, with a cackle, "we're all crazy bastards, obviously, but we *are* really loving it again."

the golden ratio

Ten stone classics from ACR's illustrious history. By **ANDREW PERRY.**

Shack Up

(Factory Benelux/Les Disques du Créspuscule 7-inch, 1980)

After Topping found Banbarra's 1975 deep-funk nugget on import, he and Moscrop, who'd both learnt trumpet at school, realised its horn part was just two notes. Thus arose ACR's otherworldly early-signature parp, on this pioneering alt-floorfiller released by Factory's Belgian associates.

Flight

(Factory 12-inch, 1980)

Like Isaac Hayes's Theme From Shaft beamed from Alien's lost-in-spaceship, here's a Martin Hannett production masterpiece to rank alongside Joy Division's Atmosphere, its crackling snare and Jah Wobble-esque bass rumble leaving an audio chasm for awed listener contemplation.

Lucinda

(from Sextet, Factory, 1982)

Possibly self-recorded as early as late 1980, this second-LP opener unveiled a newly feminised Ratio, with Martha Tilson's ethereal 'demons and angels' keening as the wispy icing on a delectable pop-funk gâteau. The whole album, with flavours of samba, jazz-funk, disco and Manc weirdness, is a joy.

Wild Party

(Factory 12-inch, 1985)

One of three non-album 12-inches unleashed after Topping's 1983 departure, while Jez Kerr bedded in as an airier vocal presence. Here, his melancholy mid-shindig wonderings exquisitely drift over a juddering electro beat, like a post-industrial Northern cousin of Kraftwerk's Ralf Hütter.

Won't Stop Loving You (Bernard Sumner Mix)

(from acr:mcr, A&M, 1990)

This solid-gold torch song, originally entitled The Big E (short for 'elbow', honest), failed to register first time around, as its boat-party video had to be withdrawn following the Marchioness disaster. Enter Sumner, ladling on Italo-house pianos *à la* New Order's *Technique*.

Funk Off

(from Change The Station, Robs Records, 1997)

After almost 20 years in the game, ACR felt less pressure to be dark or edgy, settling into their own classy groove. Here, they bust out a flat-out funk jam, topped with sassy brass and infectious flute riff. An alternative future as the post-baggy Booker T & The M.G.'s nearly beckoned.

Mind Made Up

(from Mind Made Up, Soul Jazz, 2008)

acr
a certain ratio mind made up

Ratio's first album in 11 years dialled down the technology to explore rawer funky avenues. Over a simmering Papa Was A Rolling Stone pulse, the title track overlays Kerr's musings on open-mindedness with Moscrop's spaced wah wah and Denise Johnson's starsailing vocal improvisations.

Taxi Guy

(from ACR Loco, Mute, 2020)

ACR's '20s comeback record climaxed with a Brazilian-style percussion workout which even puts 1981's Winter Hill and 1986's Si Firmir O Grido in the shade, careering from smouldering jazz, through samba party madness, into 303-bashing 'acieeed' like no other band on earth.

Big Boy Pants

(from ACR:EPR 12-inch, Mute, 2021)

Creatively firing after *ACR Loco*, Kerr, Johnson and Moscrop kept the ball rolling to deliver more than another album's worth of excellent and mindbogglingly diverse music across three EPs, here evoking On-U Sound and Sabres-era Andrew Weatherall with a dub rib-rattler.

Afro Dizzy

(from 1982, Mute, 2023)

While packing wry Factory-era references (A Trip In Hulme: "Have you had dinner? Yeah, from a skip"), this latest waxing points avowedly forward, with Afro Dizzy's delirious breakbeating ingeniously constructed around samples of Afrobeat drum legend Tony Allen, amid celestial cooing from 25-year-old Ellen Beth Abdi.

The 1982 revival: ACR today (from left) Kerr, Johnson, Moscrop.

Burt Bacharach

(1928-2023)

Mr. SONG

One of the last great star songwriters, linking Milhaud and The Beatles, The Blob and Austin Powers, Burt Bacharach combined sparkling sophistication with a devastating emotional range, turning melodies that taught the world to sing and still amaze peers and devotees. "Burt was in touch with the soul," they tell Bill DeMain.

Getty

THE FIRST TIME I INTERVIEWED Burt Bacharach, in 1995, his opening words to me were, "You realise our backs are up against the wall, right? Let's do this."

Whether he had a studio date or writing session that day, I don't know, but it was clear, as it would be each of the eight times we spoke over the years, that Bacharach, who died on February 8 at the age of 94 from natural causes, didn't enjoy revisiting his musical legacy. In conversation, he could seem preoccupied, like he was working out some melodic puzzle in his head. Ask him about the inspiration for A House Is Not A Home or The Look Of Love, and he might come across as impatient or frustratingly brief. Of the latter, he told me, "I watched the scene of Ursula Andress dancing in Casino Royale and the melody came to me."

What mattered most for Bacharach was the now, the next, the new. "I like the present and the future," he said.

That restless, forward-looking energy was at the heart of his world-conquering melody writing. That several of his songs had cities in the titles – Do You Know The Way To San Jose, Twenty Four Hours From Tulsa among them – makes poetic sense, because his tunes often felt like living skylines. With elegantly constructed architecture that yearned upwards, their dynamic push and kinetic leaps always seemed in quest of sky-scraping emotion. ➢

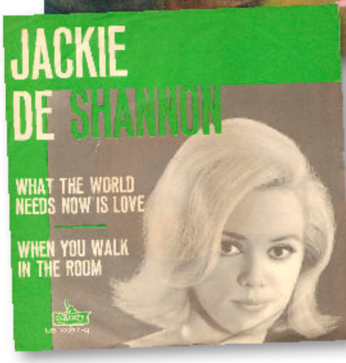
Blue on blue: Burt Bacharach in London, 1966.

The story of his life: (clockwise from top left) Burt Bacharach with Marlene Dietrich, 1960; recording with Dionne Warwick, Pye Studios, London, 1964; with wife Angie Dickinson; (opposite) with Hal David and Oscars, 1970; on the Bacharach 1970 TV special with Dusty Springfield; Bacharach in 1960.

Bacharach visualised it in a similar way. When I asked how he composed, he said, "I like to get away from the piano. I can hear a long line that way, peaks and valleys. I can hear the whole song without worrying about what my hands are playing. I get a sense of balance that I wouldn't get by just sitting at the piano."

Through the 1960s and early '70s, Bacharach found an ideal three-way balance with Hal David and Dionne Warwick. David's everyman eloquence as a lyricist and Warwick's nimble voice, with its cool ache, helped propel dozens of Bacharach's tunes into the charts and the fabric of our times, beginning with Don't Make Me Over in 1962, Make It Easy On Yourself (from 1963's *Presenting Dionne Warwick*) and 1964 US Top 10 smash Walk On By.

DON'T MAKE ME OVER
DIONNE WARWICK



"When I heard Walk On By the first time, it was probably an 8.5 or 9 on the tectonic scale," recalls Jimmy Webb, who, aged 18 in 1964, was two years away from his own success. "In the songwriting world, everybody's ears perked up at the same time. It was like, 'Holy moly, who and what are we dealing with here?!' And then, it was song after song."

"Burt had all these sophisticated melodies, but then he'd insert these chord changes with a rootsy, gospel feel," says Jackie DeShannon, who would debut several Bacharach-David hits in the '60s. "Think of Message To Martha or Reach Out For Me. Burt was in touch with the soul, and that brought listeners in."

Of those earliest hits, Warwick's Anyone Who Had A Heart (both Cilla Black and Dusty Springfield charted with covers in the UK) best epitomises the lavish emotional fireworks that became a hallmark of the Bacharach-David style. In our conversations, Bacharach said several times that he thought of songwriting and making records "in terms of miniature three-minute movies." And there's something Hitchcockian in those clock-like piano chord triplets with staccato bursts of melody riding nervously above. "Anyone could look at me…" It conjures a close-up of a spurned lover in a kind of fugue state, staring both desire and daggers at their once-significant other, before the plea of the chorus and its rush of beautiful anguish.

Webb says, "That song was unlike anything on the radio. It has classical cadences in the chord structure, and a full orchestra score and polyrhythms – in other words, changing time signatures – which you just didn't hear in pop music back then. Burt just brought all his classical training right into the pop milieu. It was alchemy. It was off the map. And he wasn't just mildly successful with it. He made it into a dynasty."

BURT BACHARACH'S PRE-DYNASTIC apprenticeship was unlike any of his Brill Building contemporaries. An only child, he was born in Kansas City on May 12, 1928, and started piano lessons while in elementary school. His father's journalism job took the family to New York, and Bacharach told me about long Sunday drives out of the city, listening to the classical music station from the back seat. "The first piece of music that attracted me was Ravel's Daphnis Et Chloe Suite," he said. "It was lyrical and beautiful, and kind of turned my head around."

In high school, too small to play sports, he pivoted towards playing in bands, and fell under the spell of jazz, especially the angular sounds of bebop. "I used to sneak into the clubs on 52nd Street," he told me. "I heard Dizzy Gillespie's big band one night, and Jesus, it was like a window opening."

After serving in the army, he studied theory and composition with neo-classical composers Henry Cowell and Darius Milhaud. It was the latter who recognised his student's true gift and gently dissuaded him away from writing fringe avant-garde pieces. Bacharach recalled, "Milhaud said, 'Don't ever be afraid to write a tuneful melody.' And that changed everything for me."

For six years from 1956, Bacharach toured the world as Marlene Dietrich's conductor and arranger. "He went everywhere with her, and that really influenced his musical education," DeShannon says. "He soaked up all these musical flavours and styles – cabaret, folk, everything – and it came out in one big wonderful melodic trip."

Sometimes that trip happened within one three-minute song. DeShannon's What The World Needs Now (in a rare lapse of judgment, Dionne Warwick had passed on it) was a colourful example. "It's a pretty waltz, a country song, with gospel changes, put together with Michelangelo-level craftsmanship," DeShannon says. "Burt would combine different genres in such a way where you didn't even know it. There'd be something for everybody in each song. His melodic sense was universal and inclusive."

Kreusch/AP/Shutterstock, Getty (3), ITV/Shutterstock, Percy Hatchman/Shutterstock

"When I heard Walk On By the first time, it was probably an 8.5 or 9 on the tectonic scale."
Jimmy Webb

It was Dietrich who finally nudged Bacharach towards full-time songwriting. "She called Sinatra once to tell him he'd be sorry if he didn't record my songs," Bacharach said. In 1958, he traded the glamorous international life for the cramped, smoke-filled cubicles of midtown Manhattan's song marketplace, the Brill Building. Though he was grouped in with the teen generation of writers – Goffin & King, Mann & Weil among them – who elbowed the established Tin Pan Alley guard aside, Bacharach had 10 years, not to mention worldlier experience, on them. He told me that he preferred hanging with old-timers like Haven Gillespie, who wrote That Lucky Old Sun: "We'd have lunch then go to the race track together."

Hal David was following the footsteps of his lyricist brother, Mack David. The elder David had written I'm Just A Lucky So-And-So for Duke Ellington, and early on, even two songs with Bacharach – The Blob (the kitschy theme to the 1958 sci-fi flick) and Baby, It's You (covered by The Beatles, among others). Hal, who'd co-written a few minor hits in the '50s (American Beauty Rose, Bell Bottom Blues), was introduced to Bacharach at Famous Music Publishing in 1957. Though one of their first collaborations, Magic Moments, was a hit for Perry Como (eight weeks at Number 1 in the UK), they didn't become exclusive partners until three years later.

WALK ON BY
DIONNE WARWICK
PUT YOURSELF IN MY PLACE
I COULD MAKE YOU MINE

STEREO
DIONNE WARWICK
anyone who had a heart

In the meantime, Bacharach would often be shadowing two of his slightly younger Brill comrades, Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. In 2010, Leiber told me Bacharach would come to The Drifters sessions "practically begging us to teach him how to produce an R&B hit."

You can certainly hear elements of On Broadway and Under The Boardwalk – the slinky Brazilian 'baion' rhythm, raked guitars, dramatic stabs of strings and horns, but mostly, the welcoming open space and air left around the lead vocal – tucked in many Warwick records, including I Say A Little Prayer, another of Burt's "miniature movies". In Warwick's version, she deftly articulates a split-level script – Walter Mitty-like daydreams flickering inside, then eclipsing, routine workday moments.

"That song *is* a film and Burt was very much the director," says DeShannon. "He had his vision of the picture and the story and how the performance should match that. It's fun hearing how heavily involved Burt is in her performance too. You feel it in the arrangement. It's how he was with me. He liked to be in the room when you were doing a vocal."

"It's very deep," adds Webb. "Just the way the opening melodic phrases conjure up the morning ritual of a young working woman. It's remarkable."

Which points to something else unique about the Bacharach-David songbook. While the other era-defining sounds – Motown, The Beach Boys, The Beatles – spoke mostly to youth, via boy-girl romance, dancing, surfing, and later, psychedelic adventure, these songs unfolded in what felt like the realistic terrain of young adulthood. Bright and optimistic on the surface, the dabs of melodic dissonance coupled with David's frank explorations of co-dependent relationships, infidelity and dead-end jobs – the songs could also feel stealthily existential.

"The expected output of the '60s was aimed at sex and drugs and rock'n'roll," says Jimmy Webb. "Then imagine, right in the middle, there's this island where there's an orchestra being led by Burt, and there's this warrior poet Hal turning out these ➢

< fantastic lyrics and there's this kind of almost girl-next-door prodigy Dionne translating these older, adult concepts into language that kids could understand."

BACHARACH'S STAR POWER WAS AT FULL intensity at the dawn of the 1970s. Back-to-back television specials (guests included Barbra Streisand and Tom Jones), Oscars in 1970 for Best Score and Best Song (Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid's Raindrops Keep Fallin' On My Head), a 1971 Grammy for the Carpenters' Number 1 cover of (They Long To Be) Close To You, the front cover of Newsweek, bountiful royalties (I'll Never Fall In Love Again was covered 25 times in 1970 *alone*, by artists including Johnny Mathis and Ella Fitzgerald), and a celebrity marriage to Angie Dickinson (the couple shilled in soft-focus TV spots for Martini & Rossi vermouth).

"He Was The Reason I Started Writing Songs"

The Bee Gees' **Barry Gibb** on his lifelong love of **Burt Bacharach.**

BEFORE THE BEATLES, and before we all popped up and stuck our heads out there, it was Burt Bacharach. He was the reason I started writing songs. The Story Of My Life, which he wrote for Marty Robbins, shocked me to my roots. How simple yet sophisticated. I've sung that song a million times.

I realised early on that Burt had a rare genius. He had so much knowledge, but he understood the heart. He would change keys without you knowing it, slip in extra bars, change time – it was all subliminal and brilliant. He dominated what you thought as you went through a song. And I just couldn't help but be inspired.

Only love can break a heart: (above) Bee Gees' Barry, Maurice and Robin Gibb get down to work in 1970.

"Burt had so much knowledge, but he understood the heart."
Barry Gibb

For me, if I have an idea for a song, it has to ferment. If you wait long enough, the song will be completed in your head or your heart. And that sounds like what Burt and Hal were doing. They would take their time. I understand Burt's preference for getting away from the instrument. I do it too. It gives you total freedom. Emotional freedom, mental freedom, the freedom to bring the melody wherever you want it to go in your head without having a guitar or a piano to establish chords. You want to go somewhere you'd never imagine you would go melodically, and that was Burt's gift.

One day in 1979, there's a knock on my front door. We were going through the Saturday Night Fever thing at the time. I open the door, and there's Burt Bacharach. I nearly fainted. I was ranting about his songs. He said, "Will you call my daughter for me? She's a fan and would like to speak to you." And so I did that. But what a thrill. Later on, he asked me to collaborate on a song, but I was in a session with Maurice and Robin, and they wouldn't have liked that (*laughs*).

In 1982, we made an album, *Heartbreaker*, with Dionne Warwick. She was a very strong-minded woman, so you have to let her fly, and come up with the ideas that might inspire her to fly. What an honour to work with the instrument of Bacharach & David.

After Burt passed, and I read he was still writing into his nineties, I thought, Incredible. I don't think I could do it. I'm 76, and pretty well retired now. I'll quote Bob Dylan: "If you want to be a performer, you've got to have a purpose." That has always stuck with me. Once my brothers were gone, those moments and those feelings weren't around me any more. So I'm happy to be retired.

My songwriting became what it did because of Burt Bacharach. There was only one of him, only one Hal David, and what they did together was timeless and beautiful. We will never stop hearing their songs.

As told to Bill DeMain

All of which made his first commercial misstep feel all the more deflating. 1973's Lost Horizon, a movie musical about the utopian paradise Shangri-La, was, Burt told me, "A picture whose very premise should never have been made – just a lumpen disaster." Bacharach had poured more than a year of his time into the failed project, painstakingly coaching the cast of non-singing actors, including Peter Finch and Sally Kellerman. By the end, he and Hal David were not speaking, and consequently refused to collaborate on Dionne Warwick's next album. Contracted by Warner Bros to deliver another Bacharach-David team-up, she was forced to file a $6 million suit against the songwriters. David then sued Bacharach over a publishing dispute. Bacharach filed a countersuit. The three wouldn't speak for years.

For the rest of the decade, Bacharach wandered in the wilderness. Though commercial fortunes rallied when marriage to lyricist Carole Bayer Sager in 1982 (his third of four wives) began a decade of smooth MOR hit-making, typified by Arthur's Theme (another Oscar winner, in 1981) and That's What Friends Are For (a version by Warwick, Elton John, Gladys Knight and Stevie Wonder, benefiting AIDS charities, was the Grammys' Song Of The Year in 1987).

The mid-1990s brought the lounge revival and the Austin Powers franchise, with Bacharach a focal point for the groovy bachelor pad imagery and a provider of cameos in all three films. "His songs could be sung by a lounge singer, but they were anything but lounge music," says DeShannon. "The lazy label of 'Easy Listening' with Burt has always bewildered me," writes Elvis Costello in the linernotes to the current box set, *The Songs Of Bacharach & Costello*. "Intimate, elegant, passionate, even torrid or erotic are words that I have arrived at when thinking of just the music."

After co-writing the kitchen sink ballad God Give Me Strength for the soundtrack to Alison Anders' 1996 movie Grace Of My Heart, Costello and Bacharach continued on to make 1998's *Painted From Memory*, a suite of melancholy songs that rivals Sinatra's *Only The Lonely* or *In The Wee Small Hours* albums for sustained mood.

Writing with Bacharach was a challenge for the lyrically expansive Costello, as the composer's melodies required "tightly compressed images", and the composer refused to add even a single grace note or pick-up to accommodate an extra word. Costello writes, "It increased my appreciation of what a techni-

"The lazy label of 'Easy Listening' with Burt has always bewildered me."
Elvis Costello

Make it easy: (clockwise from top left) Burt Bacharach and Elvis Costello, 1998; Bacharach recording in 1973; Bacharach with Paul McCartney at a Grammy salute to Clive Davis, 2009; Burt cameos with What The World Needs Now Is Love for Elizabeth Hurley and Mike Myers in 1997's Austin Powers: International Man Of Mystery.

ORIGINAL SCORE COMPOSED AND CONDUCTED BY
Burt Bacharach
PAUL NEWMAN
ROBERT REDFORD AND
KATHARINE ROSS
BUTCH CASSIDY AND
THE SUNDANCE KID
ELVIS COSTELLO
WITH
BURT BACHARACH
PAINTED FROM MEMORY
BURT BACHARACH & DANIEL TASHIAN
BLUE UMBRELLA

cal master Hal David had been in expressing the most heartbreaking sentiments in relatively colloquial language."

It must be said that Bacharach's charisma and camera-ready looks (Sammy Cahn once said, "Burt's the only songwriter who doesn't look like a dentist") had always made it easy to overlook Hal David. Even Bacharach did. But as Jimmy Webb says, "Hal was one of the finest lyricists of all time, because Burt's melodies weren't that easy to cop onto. Think of the tune to Do You Know The Way To San Jose: it's almost impossible to imagine what those words would be, or where they would come from."

One of the best examples of David's sensitivity to mood and nuance is This Guy's In Love With You. A song lit from the inside by candlelight, its prolonged moment of sensual contemplation is matched by a lyric consisting almost entirely of one-syllable words. "Who looks at you the way I do…" It's elemental, primal poetry.

"Burt's melodies could be frisky and they'd sound funny with three- or four-syllable words," says Nashville-based songwriter-producer Daniel Tashian, the son of country aces Barry and Holly Tashian, who was Bacharach's main collaborator over the last five years. "More conversational constructions was the way to go for lyrics. And let's face it, the height of emotion is often expressed in one-syllable words. Just like in This Guy's In Love."

In 2019, Bacharach, who'd been working tirelessly, but unsuccessfully, for years to bring three separate original musicals to Broadway – Snow White, Some Lovers (based on O. Henry's 1905 short story, The Gift Of The Magi) and a *Painted From Memory* adaptation with Costello – was so taken with Tashian's work on Kacey Musgraves' Grammy-winning 2018 album *Golden Hour* that he invited him to his house. Within 20 minutes, they were at the piano, writing what became the first song of their understated 2020 EP, Blue Umbrella. Through the pandemic, they continued remotely. "His work ethic and energy level was incredible," says Tashian. "Everybody should take a page from that playbook. We'd be FaceTiming in the middle of the night, perfecting two bars of a song. Burt would call it 'inching along.'"

Tashian says they were finishing two new songs in the weeks before Bacharach passed. "One is called Starlight Motel, and the way Burt wrote the music is almost like he's signing off. It's beautiful. I can't wait for people to hear it."

IN A YEAR ALREADY MARKED BY much grieving for music legends, there's something specific within the songwriting community in the regard and reverence for Bacharach. Behind the acknowledgement of songs that will surely endure another 50 years, there's a sadness at the passing of the old world craft and level of melodic mastery that's much rarer now. Bacharach's singular skylines have become today's 'toplines', the arena of 'song doctors' employed to punch up repetitive tunes with more movement and variation.

When I spoke with Bacharach in 2006 about what was already an ascendance of groove-oriented songwriting (he'd even written a few tracks to Dr Dre's beats), he countered, "Is there still a need for melody these days? I think so. For melody, for romance, for love songs. I have no idea where music is going or what radio will become, but I have to believe there'll always be room for a good song."

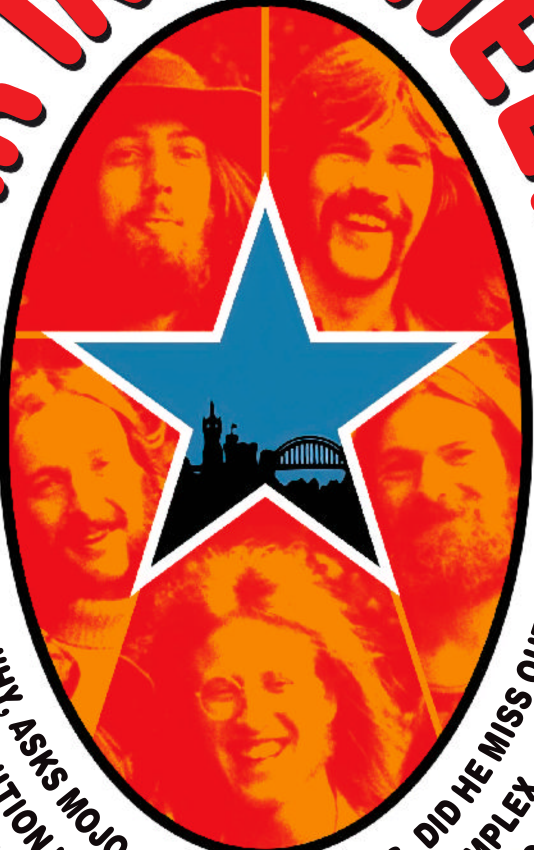
"Burt was a true believer in the music," DeShannon says. "He was one of a kind. There won't be another. He was a musical educator too, because of how he exposed different genres within the same melody. That required pure genius."

"It's the end of an era," says Webb. "He was something stable and important that I held onto, and I still hold onto. What a mark he left on the world."

Getty (2), Rankin, Allstar, Columbia/Kobal/Shutterstock

FALLING BETWEEN STOOLS OF ROCK AND FOLK AND POP, THE SONGS OF **ALAN HULL** – WRY, SEDUCTIVE, PALPABLY NORTHERN – SHONE IN GEORDIE HITMAKERS **LINDISFARNE** AND ON CULT-STATUS SOLO ALBUMS CHAMPIONED BY STING AND ALEX TURNER...

MR INBETWEEN



WORDS **JAMES McNAIR**

PORTRAIT **MICHAEL PUTLAND**

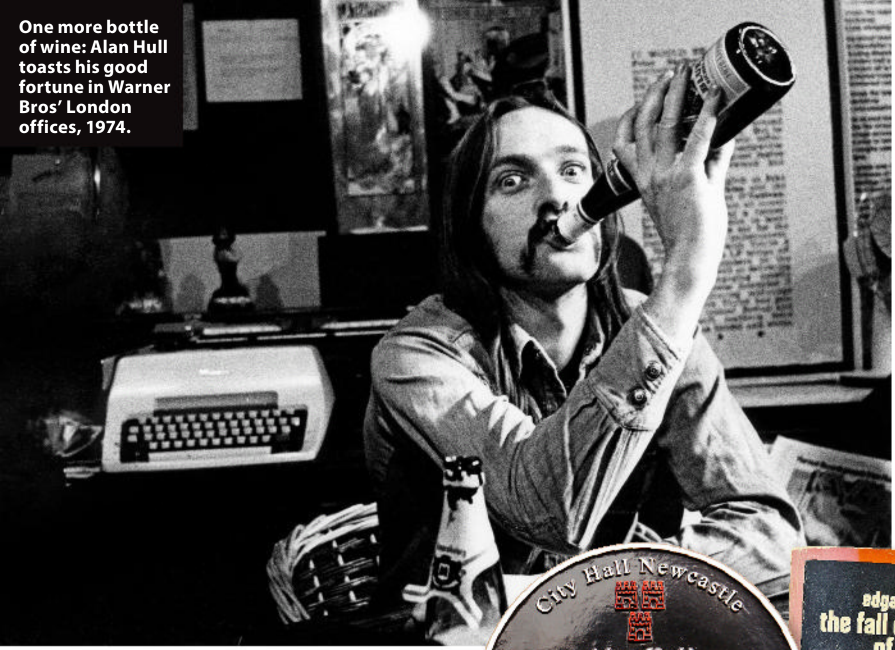
...SO WHY, ASKS MOJO OF HIS BANDMATES, DID HE MISS OUT ON THE RECOGNITION HE DESERVED? "HULLY WAS COMPLEX... DIFFICULT, BUT HOW COULD YOU NOT LOVE SOMEBODY WHO WROTE SO BRILLIANTLY?"

IT'S 1967 IN GOSFORTH, NEWCASTLE AND ONE PSYCHIATRIC NURSE employed by St Nicholas Hospital has gone off-piste. Alan Hull is taking his patients down the pub, and it's rumoured that he will only dispense mind-altering drugs he has already tried himself. Working nights, Hull reads Edgar Allan Poe, Blake and Herman Hesse's Steppenwolf, literature to expand his consciousness with or without lysergics. If his patients need soothing, he plays them piano.

Part-inspired by Poe's The Fall Of The House Of Usher, Hull has already penned Lady Eleanor, a mystical, mandolin-imbued augury of death which, in 1972, will become a huge hit for his as yet un-formed folk rock band, Lindisfarne. Like the searching, spiritually-charged Clear White Light and sparkling beacon for the homeless, Winter Song, Lady Eleanor evinces a poetic and pointed gift, and is one of some 300 tunes Hull will quickly amass during what Lindisfarne bassist Rod Clements today calls his "purple patch". Nursing, Clements believes, took Hull deeper. ➢

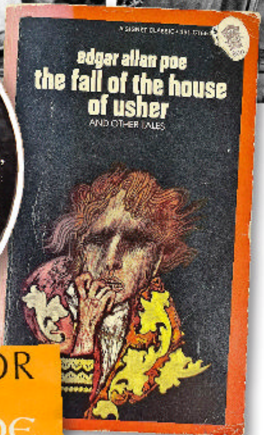
Getty/Michael Putland

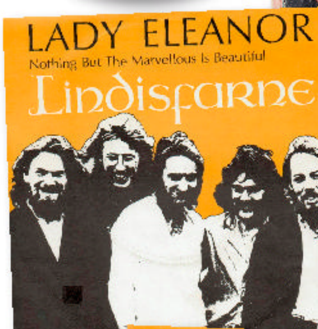
The unlikely lad: Alan Hull, May 1974.



One more bottle of wine: Alan Hull toasts his good fortune in Warner Bros' London offices, 1974.

City Hall Newcastle
Alan Hull
1945 - 1995
Born Benwell. Humanist, songwriter and poet, singer and musician.
Performed here with the group Lindisfarne on over 120 occasions.
The Fog On The Tyne was all his.
City of Newcastle upon Tyne





Lindisfarne

LINDISFARNE
Meet Me On The Corner
Scotch Mist
BRITANNIA

Lindisfarne
FOG ON THE TYNE

≺ "Alan came away from St Nick's with his eyes opened to the workings of the mind and more universes than most of us get to see," Clements tells MOJO today. "He didn't regard his patients as having something wrong with them; he just thought they had a different outlook."

For Sting, who grew up near Impulse Studios in Wallsend, where Hull demoed early material, Lindisfarne's chief songwriter was "our Bob Dylan", a potent local voice with a seer's articulacy. But Lindisfarne drummer Ray Laidlaw holds that, for all his talent, Hull was also "a lazy fucker who could never have been a Ray Davies or Frank Zappa type, because he wanted it all on a plate."

"Humanist, songwriter and poet", reads the blue plaque dedicated to Hull outside Newcastle City Hall. Local hero? Certainly. But what made this bibulous, vehemently anti-establishment figure tick, and why are some of his greatest songs still relatively unknown?

HULL'S STINT AT ST NICK'S EARNED HIM a wage after his sharp exit from The Chosen Few. Big on Beatles-esque originals and Motown covers when Hull joined on guitar and vocals in 1965, the Few had signed to Pye and played Hamburg. But in an early instance of Hull's wilfulness, he was fired from the band for refusing to bowdlerise his left-wing protest song, This Land Is Called, as demanded by Pye's head of A&R Cyril Stapleton.

Future Lindisfarne players Clements, Laidlaw, Ray 'Jacka' Jackson and Simon Cowe had already clocked The Chosen Few around Newcastle and been impressed. "It was his whole demeanour," says Clements of Hull. "He had a confidence and a sort of arrogance that was very fashionable at that time."

Meanwhile Clements, Laidlaw and Cowe's Chicago blues band The Downtown Faction grappled with a downturn in the Brit-blues boom, and, struggling to retain singers, had one eye on Hull. After leaving St Nick's, Hull was running a folk club at The Rex Hotel in Whitley Bay, playing solo sets alongside visitors including Ralph McTell and Al Stewart, and it was there, having won a copy of Bert Jansch's *Birthday Blues* in the raffle, that Clements finally spoke to him.

Asked separately how Hull rolled back then, Clements and Laidlaw both alight on the phrase, "He didn't suffer fools gladly".

"Once Hully got the measure of you he'd be best of pals," expands Laidlaw, "but he could be very acerbic. He'd see how far he could push you, but people were still drawn to him; he had something."

Hull and The Downtown Faction joined forces, first as Alan Hull & Brethren, then Lindisfarne. Ray 'Jacka' Jackson, a mandolin and harmonica ace whom Laidlaw had met at art college – and a playful stage presence to offset Hull's edgier one – was last in and shared lead vocals. Today, Laidlaw describes Lindisfarne as "five unlikely lads". For while Hull, Jackson and himself were proudly working class, Clements and Cowe were privately educated; Cowe – who died in 2015 – at the prestigious Fettes College in Edinburgh.

"That didn't mean we weren't united politically," says Clements. "Si came away from public school with the same anti-establishment feeling I did." Fully plugged in to their North East heritage, Lindisfarne boasted four multi-instrumentalists, and had striking three-part vocal harmonies mostly arranged by Cowe. "Si was a great British eccentric," Jacka says. "He came up with these incredible parts you wouldn't expect."

When Lindisfarne filed debut LP *Nicely Out Of Tune* in November 1970, its title seemed to celebrate their otherness. Signed to Charisma alongside such unlikely bedfellows as Genesis and Van der Graaf Generator, their contract stipulated a move to London. "We were perceived as wild men of the North," says Clements. "Which we played up to no end."

Jacka recalls early Charisma-roster tours and three distinct, if amicable factions on the bus: "Van der Graaf were at the back smoking jazz tabs, us in the middle with a crate of brown ale, and Genesis down the front doing crosswords."

Hull, particularly, was at best ambivalent about London. Last to relocate, he missed his young family, and he chafed at the disruption to his long-established domestic routine. Typically, breakfast back North had been followed by 'Alan's rest', then a mini Brill Building existence writing through the day and into the night over beers, maybe some brandy. London, by contrast, often brought

Getty (3)

Happy daze: (left) Lindisfarne on-stage at the Crystal Palace Garden Party, September 2, 1972 (from left) Ray 'Jacka' Jackson, Rod Clements, Ray Laidlaw, Alan Hull, Simon Cowe; (right) Lindisfarne Mk. 2, 1974 (from left) Paul Nichols, Kenny Craddock, Hull, Charlie Harcourt, Jackson, Tommy Duffy.

writer's block, but did inspire City Song. "City lights don't shine/They glare/And your music doesn't speak/It swears," Hull wrote, un-seduced.

Working on *Nicely Out Of Tune*, Charisma's in-house producer John Anthony thought he'd discovered "England's answer to The Band". The album was a critical if not commercial success, but it was Meet Me On The Corner, a skifflish, Clements-penned UK Number 5 from the 1971 follow-up *Fog On The Tyne*, which put Lindisfarne on the map. Clements had tried various permutations including "a rocked-up Vanilla Fudge version" before he and Jacka nailed the hit arrangement. The group's visibility was further tweaked when Jackson, sleeve-credited only as "the mandolin player in Lindisfarne", added his iconic part to Rod Stewart's Maggie May, session earnings £15. "At least people thought, 'Who are Lindisfarne?'" he says.

If his colleagues' contributions briefly eclipsed Hull's star – and Clements scoring Lindisfarne's first hit did irk him – he needn't have worried. *Fog On The Tyne*'s platinum-selling success shone light back on *Nicely Out Of Tune*, and when that LP's Lady Eleanor was re-released as a single it reached Number 3. Meanwhile, purchasers of *FOTT* discovered Hull's January Song and Passing Ghosts, while the title track glowed with parochial pride. Featuring Hull lyrics penned while waiting for a bus, Fog On The Tyne was ostensibly an alliterative nonsense song. But it was also a love letter to home, and to cultural identity as shield and anchor.

When MOJO plays devil's advocate and asks Clements if there was an element of inverted snob to Hull's parsing of the North/South divide, he speaks carefully but honestly:

"Yes, there may well have been, but the inequality issues Alan highlighted were totally valid, of course. He was a militant Geordie in many ways, and proud of it. But it went beyond pride – it was almost aggression."

"HE WAS A MILITANT GEORDIE IN MANY WAYS. BUT IT WENT BEYOND PRIDE – IT WAS ALMOST AGGRESSION."

Rod Clements

Maggie May
Reason To Believe
Lindisfarne
Dingly Dell

NOVEMBER, 2022. AT THE EMPIRE THEATRE IN Consett, County Durham, Ray Laidlaw and long-term Lindisfarne associate Billy Mitchell are airing their two-man show 50 Years Of Fog. It blends live music, archive footage and anecdote, hence we hear of Hull and Si Cowe's tour-bus recorder duets riling their bandmates, and of how fabled Bob Dylan producer Bob Johnston's swift exit from a band meet-and-greet dinner had Lindisfarne concerned he'd backtrack on producing *Fog On The Tyne*. ("Don't worry," Charisma's Tony Stratton-Smith soothed. "It was only because he couldn't understand a word you were saying.")

Pre-soundcheck, MOJO's chat with Laidlaw and Mitchell veers elsewhere. "What politicised Alan?" ponders Laidlaw. "He was born in Sutton's Dwellings, a rough, poverty-stricken area in Benwell. His dad worked at Vickers armament factory and his mam was a charlady for a doctor, so he'd seen the haves and have-nots. He also knew about the long history of money made in Newcastle being siphoned off to London."

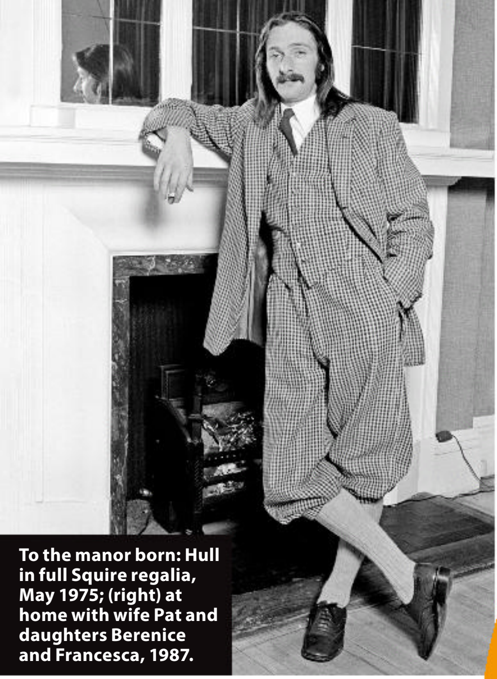
Laidlaw says Bob Johnston distilled Lindisfarne's sound to its essence on *Fog On The Tyne*. The problem, though, was how to follow the biggest-selling UK album of 1972. "Charisma wanted the golden goose to keep laying and the onus was on Hully. But the tour offers never stopped and he couldn't write on the road, and he took a lot of flak for that."

More generally, Hull was tiring of road life anyway. "That second US tour we did, Alan was miserable," says Laidlaw. "He was an internationalist but he hated going anywhere he couldn't get a decent bacon sandwich. I've got a great photo taken in Ohio at Thanksgiving. We're all tucking in and Alan's got a face like shite on him. He wasn't much of an eater, really, more of a drinker…"

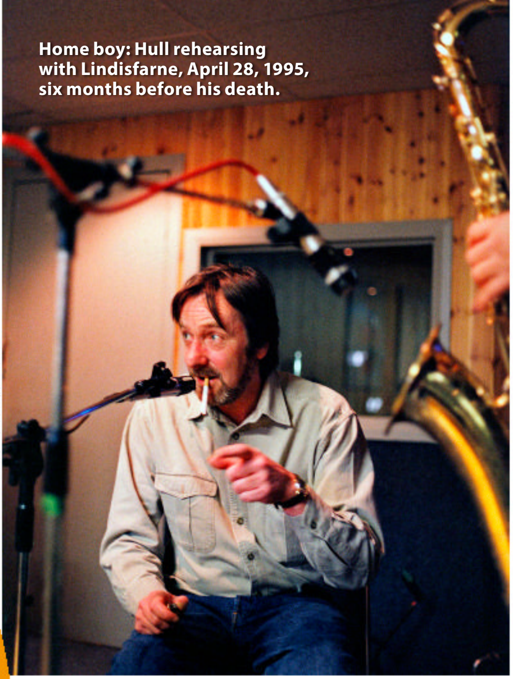
Lindisfarne's third album, *Dingly Dell*, still went Top 10, but was deemed disappointing. There were far fewer Hull songs and a cock-up in the mastering process left Clements's bass audibly under-amped. On tour in Europe, meanwhile, band relations deteriorated. "Alan was unhappy and became unbearable," says Clements. "He barely spoke to the rest of us for months."

Early in 1973, everything imploded. After Lindisfarne decoupled from a joint Australian jaunt with Slade and Status Quo, then headed to Japan, Hull wanted to sack Cowe, supposedly because of the time he spent tuning up on-stage. "Alan had been an utter toe-rag and now he wanted to change our band," says Clements. "The band that we'd brought him into."

Concerned, Tony Stratton-Smith hatched a plan. Perhaps Hull could do a Brian Wilson and stay home writing while the rest of Lindisfarne continued to tour? North-east pal Billy Mitchell was duly summoned back from Vancouver to fulfil Hull's role at gigs, but it wasn't to be. Hull and Jackson opted to peel away and form a new six-piece Lindisfarne, and Mitchell ended up joining Clem- ➢



To the manor born: Hull in full Squire regalia, May 1975; (right) at home with wife Pat and daughters Berenice and Francesca, 1987.



Home boy: Hull rehearsing with Lindisfarne, April 28, 1995, six months before his death.

"ALAN WAS AN INTERNATIONALIST BUT HE HATED GOING ANYWHERE HE COULDN'T GET A DECENT BACON SANDWICH."

Ray Laidlaw

≺ ents, Laidlaw and Cowe in their new band, Jack The Lad.

WHILE LINDISFARNE MARK II's *Roll On, Ruby* (1974) and *Happy Daze* (1975) would fail to chart, Hull had already laid the cornerstone of his future cult status. *Pipedream*, his 1973 solo debut, remains arguably his finest moment. Was it inevitable he'd strike out on his own? "I think so," says Clements. "It suited Alan's mentality better, plus he was getting more ambitious."

Calling the shots, Hull targeted avarice on Money Game and hymned domesticity on For The Bairns and Badfinger-esque love song Breakfast ("Weetabix! Jam!"). Part protest, part homelovin' man, *Pipedream* often evoked John Lennon, long a key Hull touchstone, in solo mode. Especially as Blue Murder, a dig at Clements, seemed analogous to Lennon's Paul McCartney-baiting How Do You Sleep?.

"Yes, I was *persona non grata* then," smiles Clements, who – unlike Laidlaw and Jackson – was not invited to play on *Pipedream*. "I'd taken to wearing a bit of eye-liner and that line in Blue Murder '…take off your make-up/Or don't you dare?' references that. More generally, it's about me supposedly only wanting to play blues. But I didn't want to be The Rolling Stones; I just wanted us to be Lindisfarne and be rootsy and funky as we always had been."

Elsewhere on *Pipedream*, at least one song dated from Hull's '60s purple patch. Country Gentleman's Wife, a ribald tale of cuckoldry across the class divide, reputedly derived from Hull being propositioned while briefly working as a window cleaner. "That's true!" avers Jackson. "He was a fit young lad leaping up and down the ladders and he had a round somewhere posh on the other side of the Tyne."

By now, Hull was spreading his wings. Encouraged by Stratton-Smith, he published a poetry collection, The Mocking Horse, in 1973. Then in 1974, Hull starred in Squire, a one-off TV drama that poet and playwright Tom Pickard had written for BBC2's Second City Firsts series. Hull played jobless Alfy, a man who, struggling with mental and marital breakdown, fantasises about joining the idle rich.

Getty (2), Alamy (2)

PIPEDREAM ALAN HULL
SQUIRE
Lindisfarne
'RUN FOR HOME'
ALAN HULL

"I didn't know if Alan could act," says Pickard, "but he had this wonderful, sulky insolence that was perfect for the part and he pretty much played himself. Alan had a powerful commitment to our region and our class, and he knew about the tradition of injustice that wipes out talent. He felt all of that deeply, even if he was a tight-fisted bastard who would never get a round in (*laughs*)."

Hull's second solo album was readied as *Captain Benwell*, after the Newcastle district of his birth. But after writing the title song for Pickard's drama, he opted for *Squire* instead. This time out, players included Albert Lee and keyboardist Jean Roussel, previously a foil for Sandy Denny and Cat Stevens. Hull namechecked Lennon and Dylan on Golden Oldies, and was chuffed when, upon encountering George Harrison in London one day post-recording, George ventured a "Hello, Squire!"

For US experimental rock stalwart Jim O'Rourke, seeing Pickard's drama was the conduit to *Squire*, the album, which he purchased in Japan in the early 1990s. "One More Bottle Of Wine!" he exclaims. "That's superior songwriting, and the way Alan's voice breaks is amazing." O'Rourke recounts befriending a dentist/studio owner in the Yamanashi/Nagano border region of Japan, and tells how Hull's sublime evocation of alcohol-fuelled bonhomie became the "theme song" for he and his pal's late-night parties. "I adore *Squire*," he gushes. "It will be with me for ever."

Extraordinary as they were, *Pipedream* and *Squire* went largely unnoticed. Further, Hull and Jackson's attempts to build a permanent live band from the albums' players ran aground. With drummer Ray Laidlaw still pledging allegiance to Clements, Cowe and Billy Mitchell, they tried poaching a former labelmate instead. "We took Phil Collins out for dinner and got him pissed," laughs Jackson. "He was all for leaving Genesis until he sobered up the next morning."

Somewhat inevitably, in time, this would all lead to the original Lindisfarne re-forming. "If *Pipedream* had been a hit we would never have seen Hully again," reckons Laidlaw. "But by his third solo album [1979's *Phantoms*], Alan knew Lindisfarne was where his bread was buttered – we all did."

It was local promoter Barry McKay, Clements says, who in 1976 convinced Lindisfarne to play the first of the Newcastle City Hall Christmas shows that quickly became a much-loved institution. The promise of "a big pile of cash" helped, and when Christmas Eve 1977 came around, McKay hired the Rolling Stones Mobile for the recording of live album *Magic In The Air*. Lindisfarne, too, had felt the cold wind of punk, but their live triumphs helped score a new deal with Phonogram. *Back And Fourth*, their 1978, Gus Dudgeon-produced comeback, brought Hull's Run For Home, an anthem for homesick exiles everywhere. "Alan wrote it after a scathing review of one of his London solo gigs and actually did move back North shortly after that," says Jackson.

Lindisfarne's 1990s adventures, meanwhile, included a release some fans thought their nadir, namely a new version of Fog On The Tyne recorded with roisterous Geordie footballer Paul 'Gazza' Gascoigne. The single peaked at Number 2 in the UK, denied Number 1 status by a re-release of The Righteous Brothers' Unchained Melody. For Hull, Clements, Cowe and Laidlaw, Gazzagate was great fun and an earner to boot, but Jackson refused to show for the filming of the accompanying promo video and was sacked by Hull for his defiance. "I thought it was such a retrograde step," he says of the re-make that proved to be the classic Lindisfarne line-up's swan-song. "Everything we'd achieved up in flames for the sake of a novelty hit."

IN 1994, AGED 49, ALAN HULL BEGAN WORK ON WHAT was to be his final solo LP, *Statues & Liberties*. It was co-produced by Dave Denholm, who later became Dave Hull-Denholm after marrying Hull's youngest daughter Francesca in 1998. "When Alan asked me to make an album with him I thought he was taking the piss," says Denholm, who today sings Hull's songs in a Rod Clements-led incarnation of Lindisfarne. "I'd been his guitar tech."

Hull requested Denholm didn't listen to his back catalogue. "I think he felt adrift and a bit anxious about the future. He wasn't getting a big return on [royalties], and he was also concerned about the state of his beloved Labour Party under Tony Blair."

Statues & Liberties' title track was frank about what Hull thought was wrong with Britain: "Aristocrats own your life".

"At that point, Alan was probably much more ready to go solo than he'd been in the early '70s," says Rod Clements. "He'd been through the miners' strike and written a song, Heroes, about that, and his political sense was coalescing into something more."

Sadly, Hull never got to hear the string arrangements Denholm added to *Statues & Liberties* mindful of Hull's admiration for Randy Newman's use of such colours. Nor did Hull hear the final versions of his almost entirely one-take vocals. On November 17, 1995, he died of a coronary thrombosis aged 50. Denholm had been working with him earlier that day.

"My only regret is that we didn't film the recording process," he says. "Not for the music or for the music business – for the family. Alan was so happy making that record."

Hull died on Rod Clements's 48th birthday. The bassist was celebrating at home with singer-guitarist Michael Chapman when a shell-shocked Ray Laidlaw called with the awful news. Like Jackson, Clements and Laidlaw, Tom Pickard, too, was devastated. "It was like losing a brother," he says. "Alan was complex… difficult… awkward, but I just loved him. How could you not love somebody who wrote so brilliantly?"

Some 27 years on, Hull's star is flickering again. The Arctic Monkeys' Alex Turner is a fan, while a recent BBC TV documentary on Lindisfarne's absent hero prompted Blur's Graham Coxon to e-mail words of praise to the Clements camp. Hull's distinctly North-eastern social realism, meanwhile, echoes through the work of young songwriters such as Sam Fender and Hector Gannet's Aaron Duff, both of whom have covered his material.

"You know, everybody has an Alan Hull story, but not all of them are true," counsels Dave Hull-Denholm. "There's a scene in Squire that's a bit A Clockwork Orange where he comes up the escalator with this mad expression on his face. People go, 'That was Alan!', but I'm not sure. He was more layered and complex than that."

"Did anybody know the real Hully?" ponders Ray Laidlaw. "Probably only [his wife] Pat did. Alan could be a right pain in the arse, but he could also be very loving. All that piss-taking and bravado was just his shield."

An 8-CD box set, Lindisfarne – Radio Times: Live At The BBC, is released on March 31 by Repertoire Records.

Working-class hero: Hull reveals his favourite Beatle, Newcastle City Hall, September 30, 1972.

OLD TYNE MUSIC

Ten key ALAN HULL songs. Selected by JAMES McNAIR.

LADY ELEANOR

(Nicely Out Of Tune, 1970)

Spectral organ, spidery mandolin and a lithe, loping bass line star in an unlikely UK Number 3 hit. "I wrote it almost in a trance," Hull recalled. "It's a very mystical song, but I know it's about death."

CLEAR WHITE LIGHT (PT. 2)

(Nicely Out Of Tune, 1970)

"Kind of metaphysical," declared producer John Anthony. With its stunning a cappella opening, the spiritually-charged Clear White Light was sung at Hull's funeral. "Alan was definitely anti-organised religion, but I think he felt there was something out there," notes Rod Clements.

WINTER SONG

(Nicely Out Of Tune, 1970)

"Do you spare a thought for the homeless tramp/Who wishes he was dead?" sings Hull of winter's bite in a song of palpable, frosty magic. Hull fan Sam Fender's November 2020 cover version raised money for homelessness charity People Of The Streets.

JANUARY SONG

(Fog On The Tyne, 1971)

Codified, certainly, but a deeply personal song as Hull explores themes of community and mutual support while eyeing himself in the mirror: "I see that he is trying to cry/But the tears they will not fall." The simple arrangement is all the song's fine melody needs.

ALL FALL DOWN

(Dingly Dell, 1972)

A diatribe with a sing-along chorus, this early Green-leaning anthem skewered corrupt town planners ("We can have a motorway/With motorway dough"). Hull fan Elvis Costello cites it as a melodic influence on his own Tramp The Dirt Down.

MONEY GAME

(Pipedream, 1973)

Clever chord modulations drive a melodically adventurous waltz lampooning fat cats who accrue moolah in search of status. "What does money mean, anyway?/I've got more than all that," Hull tells Anna, the daughter of one such bread-head.

I HATE TO SEE YOU CRY

(Pipedream, 1973)

"Was it written for [Hull's wife] Pat?" says Ray Laidlaw. "I've always assumed so." Another sublime piano ballad, deliberately placed in a key that stretched Hull's vocal range, so his voice cracked with emotion. Heart-rending and fully lived-in.

COUNTRY GENTLEMAN'S WIFE

(Pipedream, 1973)

Recorded live in the studio, just vocal and acoustic guitar, CGW's ribaldry deepens as Hull lays stress on the first syllable of 'Country'. "Alan loved doing that," says Ray Laidlaw. "He really laid it on thick."

ONE MORE BOTTLE OF WINE

(Squire, 1975)

Exquisitely arranged for piano, strings and brass, this strangely moving plea for unity celebrates booze as social grease; as healer, even. "Let's have another drink for God's sake," implores Hull. Heady stuff.

GOLDEN OLDIES

(Squire, 1975)

"John Lennon was a huge influence on Alan," says Rod Clements. "The edginess of his writing, his social conscience." Hull paid homage here, name-checking John Winston and a certain Robert Allen Zimmerman. He was already pining for a lost golden age.

WATCH THAT MAN

DAVID BOWIE's 1973 brought two smash albums, spiralling success, and the first signs of the madness that might lurk behind the singer's beguiling new mask. As *Aladdin Sane* and *Pin Ups* celebrate their 50th birthdays, Bowie's colourful comrades – and Lulu – remember a year of musical questing, cocaine and... betrayal? "We were like... 'What the hell just happened?'" they tell TOM DOYLE.

Portrait by RICHARD IMRIE.

Camera Press/Richard Imrie

THE DOCTOR WHO EXTRAS WERE A TAD CONFUSED. IT WAS JANUARY 3, 1973, and in a break from filming at BBC Television Centre in west London, they were mooching around in the bar and sizing up some fellow aliens whose sci-fi get-ups didn't seem to quite fit with the episode they were shooting. A couple of them decided to enquire further and wandered up to what appeared to be the interlopers' spiky red-haired leader.

"Bowie said, 'Yeah, we're on the next episode,'" remembers Spiders From Mars drummer Woody Woodmansey with a wry laugh. "These guys were saying, 'But we've seen all the scripts and there's nothing like what you are…' He went, 'Well, you obviously haven't read the script properly.' We all just played along with it, and they went away baffled."

So freakish-looking in their glittering gold and black outfits that they appeared ready to do battle with Jon Pertwee's space-travelling Time Lord, Bowie and The Spiders From Mars were in fact at the Beeb to record a stomping, live-in-the-studio performance of The Jean Genie, the first single to be released from their forthcoming album, *Aladdin Sane*.

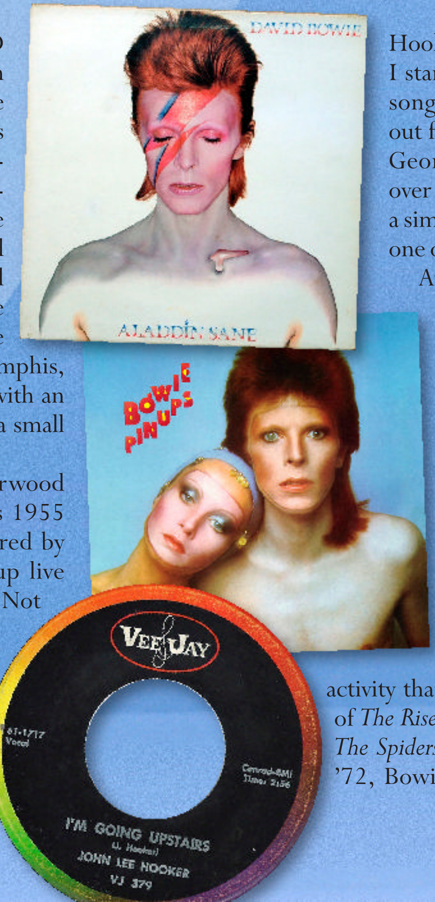
THE JEAN GENIE HAD come to Bowie in a flash of inspiration on the band's tour bus the previous September. Bowie's childhood pal, King Bees bandmate and *Hunky Dory* sleeve artist George Underwood was along for the ride and sitting at the front of the coach when, somewhere between Cleveland and Memphis, he started messing around with an electric guitar plugged into a small Pignose amp.

Legend has it that Underwood began playing Bo Diddley's 1955 single, I'm A Man, as covered by The Yardbirds in souped-up live and studio versions in '64/5. Not so, he tells MOJO today.

"One of the songs we used to do back in the day was I'm Going Upstairs… 'bring down all my clothes'… a John Lee Hooker number," he says. "Anyway, I started playing the riff from that song for a bit, then David called out from the back of the bus, 'Hey George, can you pass the guitar over here?' David proceeded to do a similar riff, which ended up as the one on The Jean Genie."

At RCA Studios in New York on October 6, 1972, The Jean Genie was cut with such haste that Bowie chose to keep the take that included bassist Trevor Bolder fluffing the bass line when he moved too quickly from E to B into the first chorus. "Trevor said to Bowie, 'What? Do I play it wrong on-stage every night?'" Woodmansey recalls. "And he did."

Amid the whirlwind of activity that had arrived with the success of *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars* in the summer of '72, Bowie was forced to write ➢



Shock of the new:
David Bowie revelling in his 1973 splendour.

“We went, ‘What the fuck? Did he just say *wanking*, Ken?’”
Woody Woodmansey on Time

DAVID BOWIE
RCA
STEREO
APBO-0001
Victor
TIME
3:38

◂ the songs for its follow-up while on the road in the US. “He still had to get that next album together,” Woodmansey says. “Writing on the road was different for him, but probably in a good way. He was picking up the influence of being in America on tour.”

In his attempt to process the sensory overload of his first proper US jaunt, Bowie began to piece together the songs for *Aladdin Sane*, a travelogue characterised by thrills and fears and the feelings of dissociation reflected in the album’s punning title. The record was to examine what he viewed as both the alluring strangeness and dangerous enticements he had experienced in America.

“We’d been approached while we were out there: ‘Anything you want, man. Sex, drugs, whatever it is… we’ll get it for you,’” says Woodmansey. “Because of the nature of the band, we attracted all the beautiful people and all the fucking weirdos.”

But, having achieved fame by inhabiting the weirdo-magnet character of Ziggy Stardust, Bowie was having trouble coming to terms with him. As he admitted to MOJO’s Paul Du Noyer in 2002, “I guess what I was doing on *Aladdin Sane*, I was trying to move into the next area – but using a rather pale imitation of Ziggy as a secondary device.”

More than a pale imitation, *Aladdin Sane* was a character with a fractured personality created at a time when, as Bowie later confessed, “I didn’t like myself.” Success was to conspire with an identity crisis and inflating ego (pumped up by cocaine) throughout 1973: the year that the Ziggy mask began to eat into David Bowie’s face.

AFTER HIS YEARS OF STRUGGLE, *Aladdin Sane* was the first album that David Bowie wrote and recorded safe in the knowledge that there was a huge UK audience eagerly awaiting his next move. At the same time, his manager, Tony Defries, was set on pushing Bowie in America. To this end, he initially approached Phil Spector to produce *Aladdin Sane*.

“He either declined or never answered,” Defries tells MOJO today. “I loved what he’d done with that Wall Of Sound effect. I thought it would make for a very American feel to the album. But it wouldn’t have been the album we got.”

Instead, aside from The Jean Genie and the synthesised doo-wop of Drive-In Saturday (similarly recorded at RCA in Manhattan, on December 9, ’72), this most American-minded of records was made back in London at Bowie’s regular haunt, Trident Studios in Soho, and co-produced, like *Hunky Dory* and *Ziggy Stardust*, by himself and Ken Scott.

One significant change to the set-up was the addition of Mike Garson. The Brooklyn pianist had been drafted in for the Ziggy Stardust Tour the previous autumn after Bowie and guitarist Mick Ronson’s first choice for keyboard player, Annette Peacock – whose *outré* 1972 jazz rock album, *I’m The One*, they both adored – had turned down the gig.

Sat at the piano today, on a Zoom call to MOJO, Garson plays the intro to Changes, augmented with his trademark flowing arpeggios, to illustrate how he sailed through an audition for the Spiders that lasted mere seconds. “Mick Ronson said, ‘You’ve got the gig.’ I said, ‘I didn’t even start playing, Mick,’” he grins. “He said, ‘No, I can tell.’”

At Trident, Garson took up his position at the studio’s Bechstein grand, famously played by Paul McCartney on Hey Jude, Elton John on Your Song and, of course, Rick Wakeman on Life On Mars?. “The notes found you…” Garson says. “You didn’t find the notes.”

The headspinning freestyle solo that Garson played over the vamping two-chord middle section of the title track of *Aladdin Sane* was to make his name. Given free rein by Bowie, the piano player first tried a bluesy take, then a Latin-flavoured one, before the singer encouraged him to go full-on avant-jazz.

“When I played it, the ceiling lifted,” Garson says. “I played that solo as if… ‘If David could play as well as me, what would he play?’ I think what we had in common was the free-flowing, spontaneous unfolding of creation in the moment. And he gave me space beyond space.”

“Here comes Garson,” Defries notes, “who in a way, complementing Mick, has much the same impact on David: somebody who can take his musical ideas, and express them in a whole range of other music.”

Elsewhere, on Time, Garson infused New Orleans jazz with European classical stylings. “David knew that I played old-style jazz, and he asked me to twist it. And he knew I loved Liszt and Chopin.”

Woodmansey’s main memory of Time involves Bowie’s vocal take. “We were all stood there listening and then he went, ‘Falls wanking to the floor…’ We went, ‘What the fuck? Did he just say “wanking”?’ ‘I think so.’ ‘Did he say wanking, Ken?’ (*assumes ‘posh’ tone of Ken Scott*) ‘I believe so… I believe it was wanking.’ ‘Oh, right.’ Yeah, that was definitely a shock.”

LESS CLEAR WAS WHICH OF BOWIE’S then-current paramours was the inspiration for the entrancing female figure of Lady Grinning Soul, with its ornate Garson-played figures and Bond theme air. Various theories had her as US soul singer Claudia Lennear, music publicist Cyrinda Foxe or rumoured transgender model Amanda Lear. “The reason I think it was Amanda Lear,” says Tony Defries, “is because Amanda, for David, was very much approachable, unapproachable, and enormously fascinating.”

“There was a lot of names going around,” Woodmansey says. “It was a great track… I mean, it meant a lot to him. It’s the only track he ever went to the mix through those albums. So, he obviously wanted to take care of it and make sure it did what he wanted it to do.”

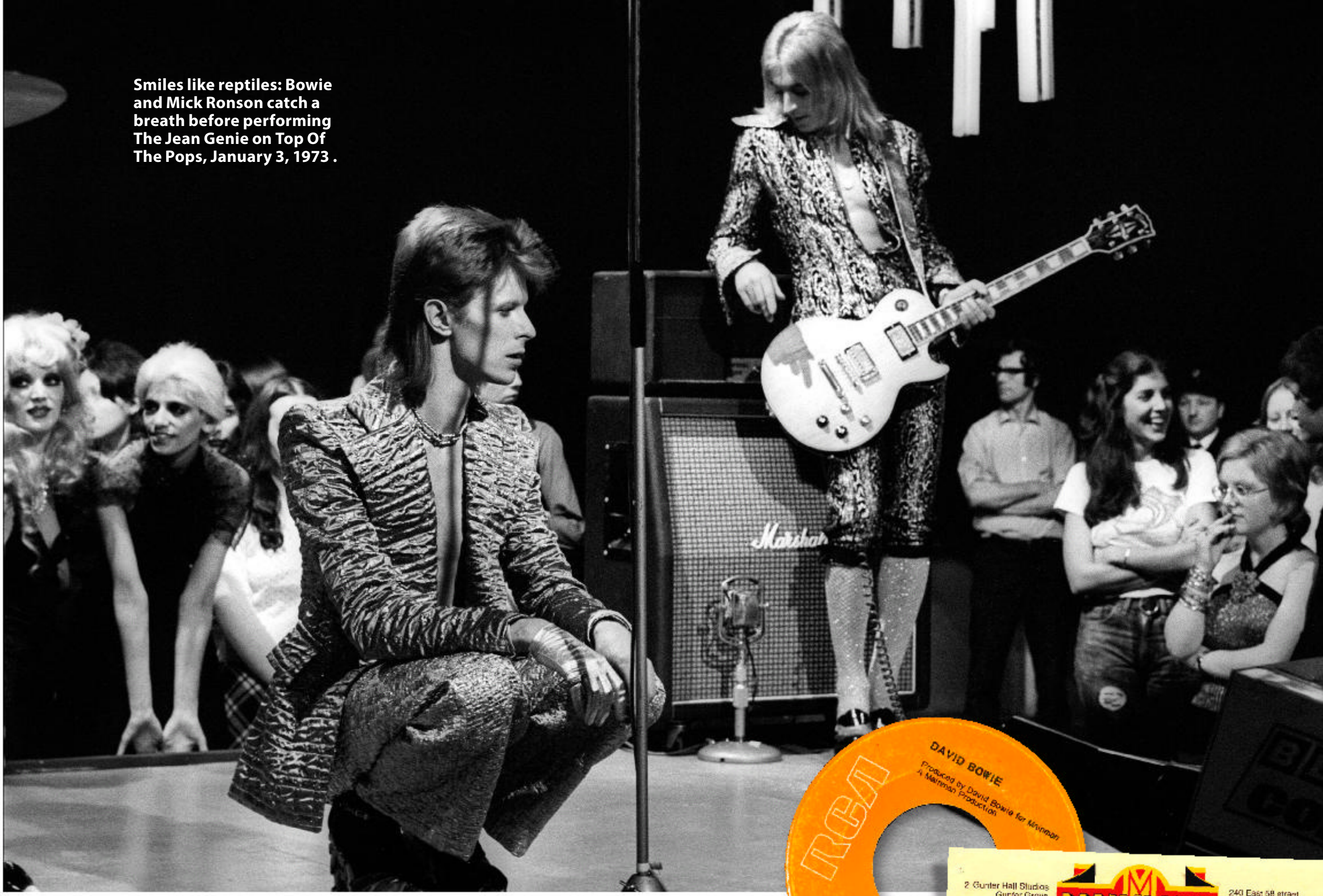
In other parts of the record, the influence of The Rolling Stones was strong: the *Exile On Main St.* sashay of Watch That Man (inspired by the peacocking scenes at a New York party); the glammed-up makeover of Let’s Spend The Night Together.

“There was a certain fascination with Mick [Jagger],” says Defries, “that led to them becoming acquaintances then quite close friends for a while. In fact, David moved to Oakley Street ➢

RCA
STEREO
David Bowie
Let's spend the night together

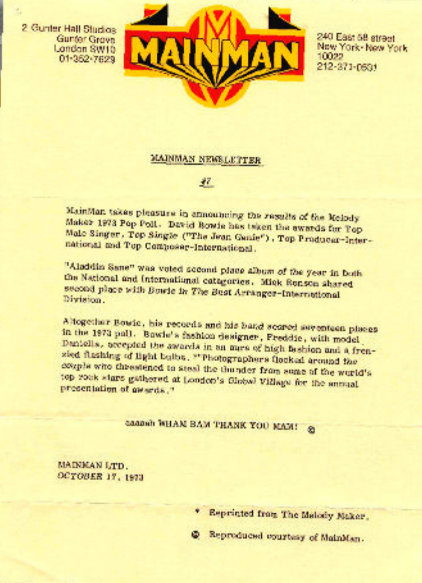
Keystone chops: (from top) *Aladdin Sane* pianist Mike Garson; I’m The One by Annette Peacock, who turned Bowie down; Let’s Spend The Night Together 45.

Getty (4), Bob Gruen, Barrie Wentzell, MainMan Archives



Smiles like reptiles: Bowie and Mick Ronson catch a breath before performing The Jean Genie on Top Of The Pops, January 3, 1973 .

DAVID BOWIE
Produced by David Bowie for Mainman
A Mainman Production
RCA
THE JEAN GENIE
(David Bowie)



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MAINMAN NEWSLETTER

47

MainMan takes pleasure in announcing the results of the Melody Maker 1973 Pop Poll. David Bowie has taken the awards for Top Male Singer, Top Single ("The Jean Genie"), Top Producer-International and Top Composer-International.

"Aladdin Sane" was voted second place album of the year in both the National and International catagories. Mick Ronson shared second place with Bowie in The Best Arranger-International Division.

Altogether Bowie, his records and his band scored seventeen places in the 1973 poll. Bowie's fashion designer, Freddie, with model Daniella, accepted the awards in an aura of high fashion and a frenzied flashing of light bulbs. *"Photographers flocked around the couple who threatened to steal the thunder from some of the world's top rock stars gathered at London's Global Village for the annual presentation of awards."

aaaaah WHAM BAM THANK YOU MAM! ©

MAINMAN LTD.
OCTOBER 17, 1973

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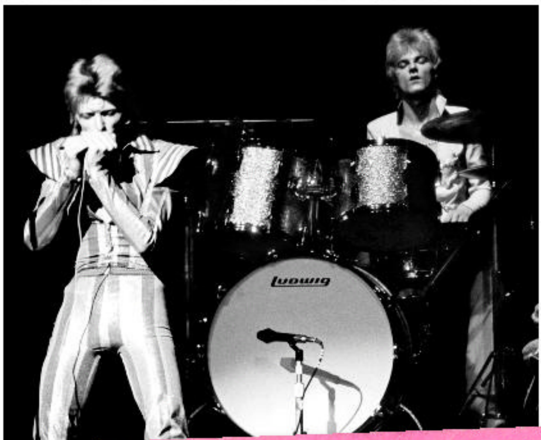
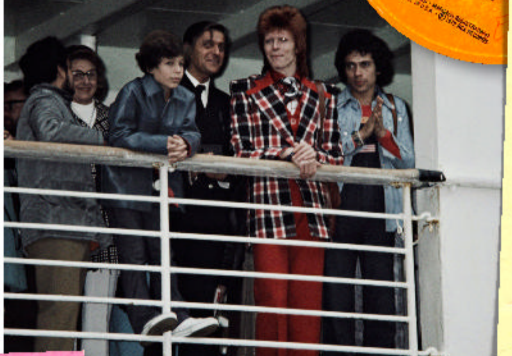
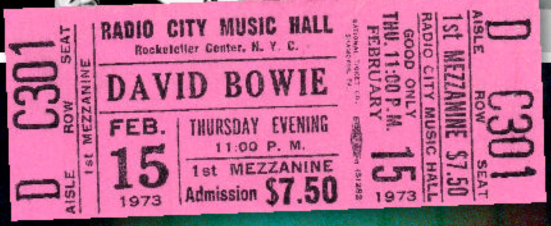






D C301
AISLE ROW SEAT
1st MEZZANINE

RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL
Rockefeller Center, N. Y. C.

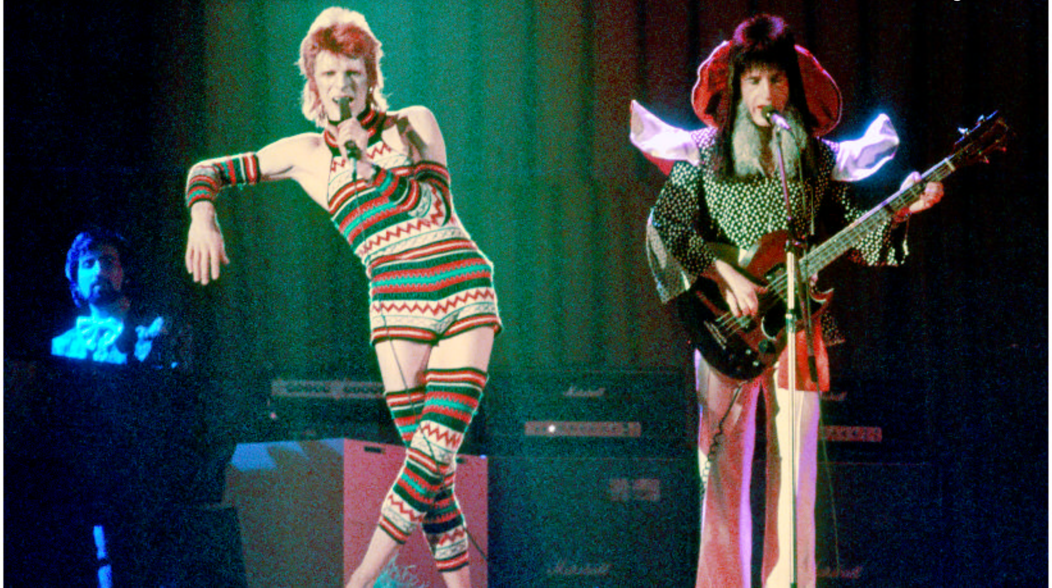
DAVID BOWIE

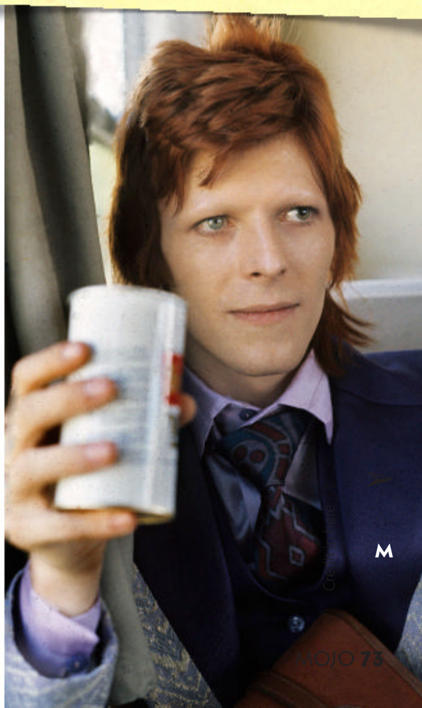
FEB.
15
1973

THURSDAY EVENING
11:00 P. M.
1st MEZZANINE
Admission $7.50

FEBRUARY
THU. 11:00 P.M.
GOOD ONLY
RADIO CITY MUSIC HALL
1st MEZZANINE $7.50
15
1973
D C301
AISLE ROW SEAT

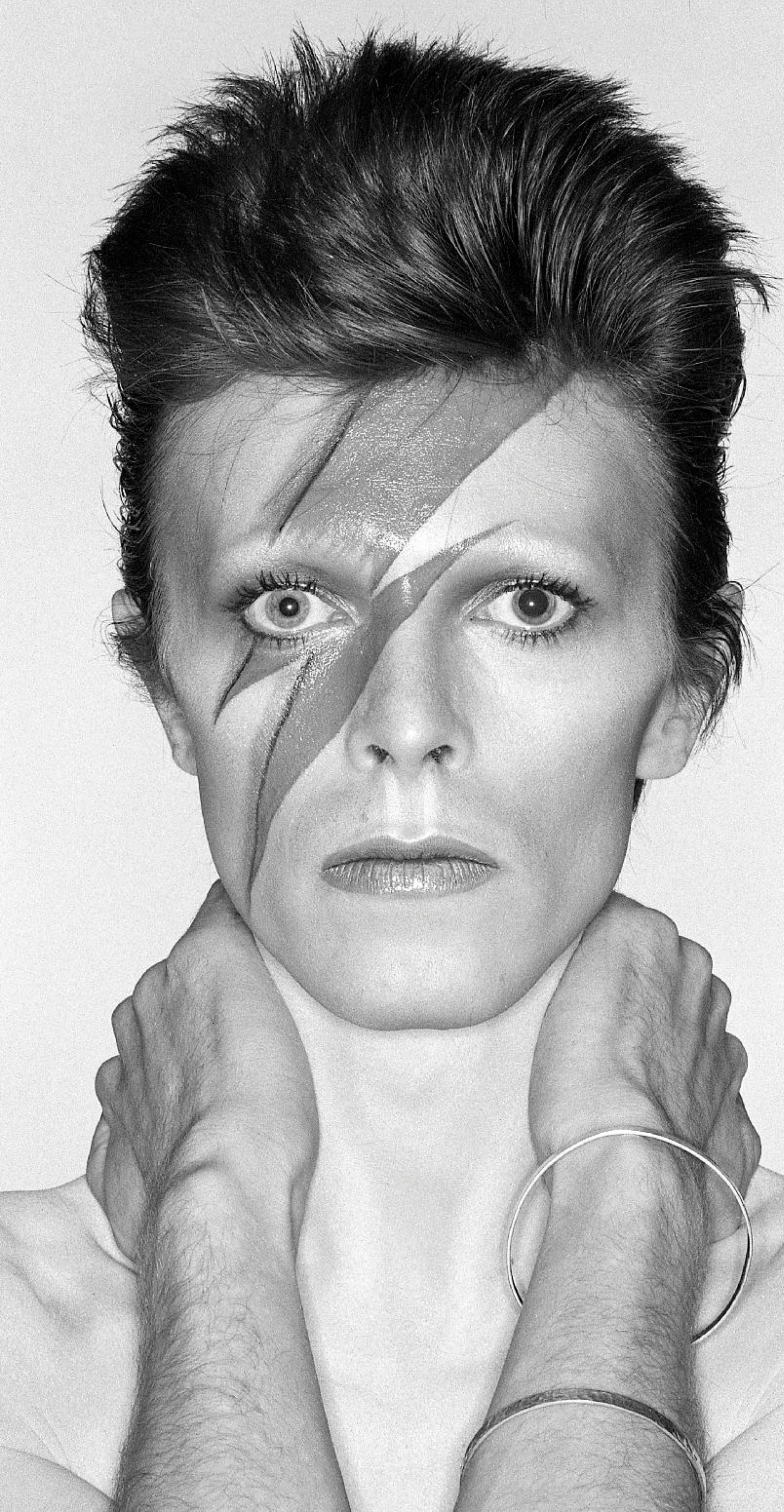
Let yourself go: (clockwise from above left) Bowie and Woody Woodmansey at New York's Radio City Music Hall, February 14, 1973; arriving in Tokyo, April 5; on the train from Paris to Boulogne, May 4; Ziggy on-stage with Garson (left) and Trevor Bolder (right).





FLASH OF GENIUS

The creation and afterlife of the *Aladdin Sane* album cover, by **DANNY ECCLESTON**.



IT CAN'T BE common for an album artwork brief to begin with a demand for the most expensive treatment available. But these were Tony Defries's exact instructions to *Aladdin Sane* cover photographer Brian 'Duffy' Duffy.

"The key was to make something that was different and astonishing and important," Defries tells MOJO today. "Which we managed to do with *Hunky Dory* and *Ziggy*. But this needed to, in a sense, go up a step."

Defries's logic, explains Duffy's son Chris – the man behind a new book containing the full story and shoot – was cunning. "He wanted to commit RCA, to make them spend as much as possible on Bowie, on the basis that they couldn't then drop him. There was too much to write off."

Duffy brought the luxe production values he'd already applied to the 1973 Pirelli calendar, where he'd collaborated with airbrush artist Philip Castle.

"For the reproduction, Duffy opted for this Kodak process called dye transfer, which produced a fantastic depth of colour," the photographer's son continues. "It also gave the right kind of surface for airbrushing. Then he had the plates made up in Switzerland. These were all the most expensive options you could choose."

Bowie's end of the brief was simple – he wanted a flash: something like the Taking Care Of Business logo used by Elvis since his return to gigging in 1969. And the record was to be called A Lad Insane (Chris Duffy claims the re-spelling was his father's idea).

Preparing for the January 13 shoot at Duffy's studio in London's Primrose Hill, make-up artist Pierre Laroche started drawing a small flash on Bowie's cheek. Duffy stopped him and sketched another across half of Bowie's face: "Now fill that in."

Chris Duffy has had 50 years to ponder its power.

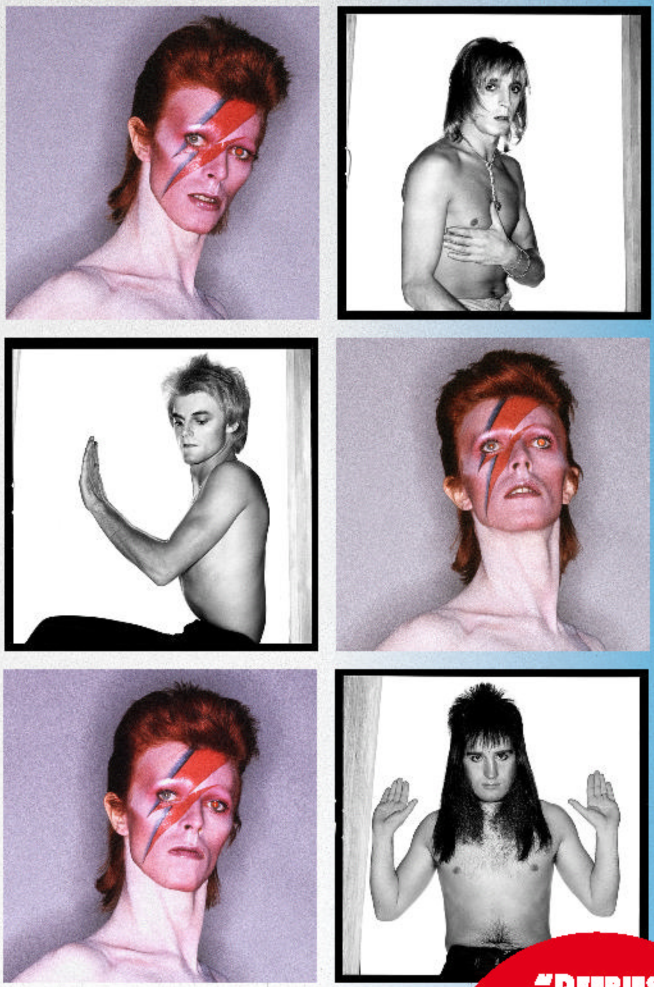
"A flash by its nature makes you jump – so it's got the drama," he says. "The image is androgynous – it works for men and women – and it kind of poses more questions than answers. It left a lot for conjecture and speculation."

One of the most fertile sources of speculation is the blob of reflective liquid that collects in the hollow of Bowie's collarbone. Inspired by John Pasche's 'lips' logo for The Rolling Stones, Duffy saw it as a merchandising opportunity. "He had a half a mind that the droplet could be a piece of jewellery," says Chris Duffy. "That didn't go anywhere in the end."

For nearly 40 years after the April '73 release of the album, *Aladdin Sane*'s eyes-closed image was pretty much the only frame from the shoot the public would see. Then, in 2010, Bowie

The Mad Lads: Bowie plus (opposite, from top) Ronson, Woodmansey and Bolder bare their souls at the *Aladdin Sane* cover shoot.

Duffy (7)



approved the use of the colour, eyes-open alternate for the cover of Kevin Cann's book, Any Day Now – the same shot subsequently employed by the V&A to publicise their blockbuster 2013 exhibition, David Bowie Is… Then, in mid-2020, the Duffy archive authorised the use of another outtake for the cover of MOJO. At last, Duffy's new book delivers the shoot in its entirety, along with essays by Kevin Cann, Paul Morley, Charles Shaar Murray and others. The images also play a part in an Aladdin Sane: 50 Years exhibition at London's South Bank Centre in April-May and a wider-ranging show, covering all five of Duffy's Bowie shoots, debuting in Madrid this month. "I thought it was time fans saw all of it," says Chris Duffy.

Bowie's *Aladdin Sane* cover brought the values of adland to a cultural product, and delivered everything its clients had hoped for. RCA had paid through the nose, but weren't complaining.

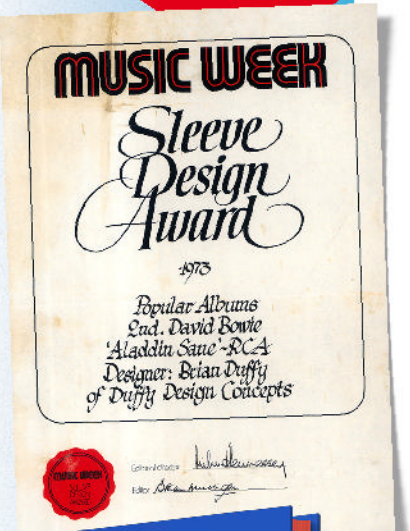
"Defries had a master plan to make David a world superstar," says Chris Duffy. "But it's funny: Bowie only ever had the flash on his face once, that one day."

In Duffy's book, Geoffrey Marsh describes the Aladdin Sane flash as exemplifying "all of David's remarkable artistry but also the impact his career had on social values, freedom of expression and the potential for everybody to choose who they want to be."

Chris Duffy puts it more succinctly: "It's the Mona Lisa of pop."

Aladdin Sane: 50 Years by Chris Duffy is published on March 31 by Welbeck, £40. Aladdin Sane: 50 Years is also an exhibition at London's South Bank, April 6-May 28. Bowie Taken By Duffy is now showing at COAM, Madrid.

> "DEFRIES WANTED RCA TO SPEND AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE ON BOWIE, ON THE BASIS THAT THEY COULDN'T DROP HIM."
> **CHRIS DUFFY**



MUSIC WEEK

Sleeve Design Award

1973

Popular Albums
2nd. David Bowie
'Aladdin Sane'-RCA
Designer: Brian Duffy
of Duffy Design Concepts

ALADDIN SANE
50 YEARS

⋖ [in Chelsea] so he could be closer to Cheyne Walk where Mick already had a living space."

Panic In Detroit, meanwhile, featured an edgy lyric sketching a loose-cannon left-wing revolutionary (written after a conversation with Iggy Pop about the city's 1967 riots) and had something of the polyrhythmic percussive groove of Sympathy For The Devil, with congas played by another of Bowie's old school friends, Geoff MacCormack, to support Woodmansey's tom-tom tattoo.

"Woody and David had a bit of a disagreement about the angle of it," MacCormack remembers. "And so I was asked to do percussion in the rhythm that David wanted."

"I'd had an idea for this John Bonham-esque type thing and went into this beat and Bowie said, 'What are you doing?'" Woodmansey remembers. "'Just play a Bo Diddley beat.' I felt so deflated. So, I tried it and about 30 seconds into playing it, I was like, 'Fucking hell, he's right… This feels like the exact thing to play.'"

The intense, soulful vocal improvisations on Panic In Detroit were performed by Juanita Franklin and Linda Lewis, the latter having first encountered Bowie in 1970 when he'd visit the Hampstead commune she shared with Roundhouse DJ Jeff Dexter. Then, in 1971, when Lewis performed with Terry Reid at the Glastonbury Fair on the same bill as Bowie, the three had, as she recalls, "been a bit naughty… we stayed over at the cottage, and we took a lot of mushrooms."

Almost two years on, to Lewis's eyes, Bowie had clearly transformed into a star. "He came in from a photo shoot," she says, "with all this make-up and sparkly stuff on. I had a little joke with him and said, 'Oh, you're still wearing the make-up, then?' Then I said, 'What do you want on this particular track?' He said, 'Well, I just want you to sound like you're *panicking*. Just do what you feel.' It was great having all that freedom."

As, one by one, the tracks on *Aladdin Sane* were completed through January '73, the band were treated to rib-rattlingly loud playbacks in the Trident control room. "*Blasting*," Garson says. "I was scared for my ears. It did sound good though."

For Defries, Garson was key to the album, helping to point the way forward for Bowie. "One of the big impacts was having someone like Garson. It became a looking glass, if you like, into, 'What could I do if I didn't do Ziggy again?' Because the real problem always was *not* to do Ziggy again."

"I think Ziggy was starting to be more important than he was," reckons George Underwood. "I knew he would discard it at some point."

ALADDIN SANE WAS RELEASED ON APRIL 20, 1973, and went straight to UK Number 1 on its 100,000 pre-sales alone – an advance orders tally not seen since *Abbey Road*. But, from Tony Defries's perspective, it was in this first half of 1973 that Bowie first began to feel uneasy with stardom.

"Basically, I think success wasn't the ideal situation for David," he says now. "When *Aladdin Sane* was selling enormous quantities and crowds were shutting down railway stations, just to get a glance of him, I think that's when it all began to sink in, that he was no longer an ordinary person. The Ziggy effect was taking hold and he couldn't cope with it, really."

Geoff MacCormack, who had joined the Ziggy tour as backing vocalist/percussionist and become Bowie's closest friend and travelling companion, disagrees.

"I think he was ready for fame," he says. "I don't think it fazed him that much. He very cleverly kind of ducked away from it. He kept himself at arm's length, and he slowed his pace down. Y'know, not travelling by plane and travelling very sedately by boat and whatever."

When the nine-date Japanese leg of the tour finished in Tokyo at the end of April, the increasingly aviophobic Bowie elected to travel back to Europe with MacCormack, first via ship (the Felix Dzerzhinsky, sailing from Yokohama to Nadhodka) and then train: the Trans-Siberian Express to Moscow, and onwards to Paris. "I think that downtime gave him time to draw breath and take his mind off what was happening," MacCormack says. ➢

"DAVID WAS HARDCORE. I USED TO SAY, 'OH, I BETTER NOT SMOKE 'COS I'VE GOT TO SING.' HE SAID, 'ON THE CONTRARY, GET THE FAGS OUT.'" LULU

LULU
The Man Who Sold The World
Watch That Man
Produced by David Bowie
Polydor

≺ En route, on the Trans-Siberian Express, Bowie picked up his acoustic guitar and gave an impromptu performance in his and MacCormack's twin cabin for a handful of their fellow travellers. "Maybe seven people, but that's a lot in this small room," MacCormack remembers. "There's David with his guitar doing the smallest concert in the world."

Back in the UK, and in secret, Defries and Bowie began to formulate a retirement plan for Ziggy. The former now says that the inspiration for the scheme came from Frank Sinatra's 1971 announcement of his retirement. By 1973, anticipation was building for his dramatic comeback with *Ol' Blue Eyes Is Back*.

"David was a big Sinatra fan," says Defries. "Making the comeback is the key thing. We tried and failed to get promoters in America to book David into large arenas as a headliner. So, that was a real reason for retiring Ziggy, to be honest with you… nothing to do with music or style or anything else."

"A lot of it was based around finance," MacCormack says. "How much the management could get out of the record companies to pay for even bigger and better plans. But the whole thing about managing David in David's situation… he was kind of a moving target. *This* was the plan this day, then *this* was the plan the other day."

ol' blue eyes is back
David Bowie
SORROW
Slaughter on 10th Avenue
MICK RONSON
GITANES
FILTRE

MACCORMACK WAS ONE OF the few people close to Bowie who knew that he planned to announce Ziggy and The Spiders' retirement at the last Hammersmith Odeon show in London on July 3. "Because I hung with David, I would have been in earshot of meetings. I wasn't a paid musician as such. So, it wasn't, 'Oh where's my next gig?' It was more, 'Well, this is fun, for as long as it lasts.'"

"Mick [Ronson] knew that we were doing our last Ziggy," Defries says, "whereas Woody and Trevor didn't. I didn't want too many people to know. Where's the publicity value if you tell too many people? So, tell as few people as possible.

"But," he adds, "I said, 'If we're gonna retire, then we've got to retire in style and have a *huge* party and invite everybody.' It was a celebration."

The ostentatious aftershow bash thrown at the Café Royal in Piccadilly on the night of the Hammersmith show was a public statement of Bowie's status and pulling power. Along with the usual rock star suspects – Jagger, Ringo, the McCartneys – there was a Hollywood aura lent to the proceedings by Barbra Streisand, Tony Curtis, Janet Leigh, Britt Ekland and Ryan O'Neal.

"Someone managed to put Barbra Streisand and Elliott Gould, her ex-husband, at the same table," Defries recalls. "We had to shuffle them around to avoid an embarrassing incident."

A wide-eyed Linda Lewis was in attendance and gobsmacked to spot Angie Bowie and Bianca Jagger kissing. "Everyone was being so outrageous, and I was walking around a little bit prudish, actually," she laughs. "Back then, the way I saw it through my sort of naïve eyes, it was like, 'Wow, oh my God… two ladies together.'"

Not everyone was digging the wild and starry party vibes. Woody Woodmansey and Trevor Bolder had been left traumatised by Bowie's announcement. "We were like… 'What the hell just happened?'" says Woodmansey. "And we didn't get an answer."

Within days, the drummer received a call from Defries to tell him he wasn't being invited to France for the making of what was to become *Pin Ups*. "It was a case of, 'Are they going to fit the songs that we're going to record on *Pin Ups*?'" Defries says now. "'Are they the right musicians for those songs?'"

"There'd been no kind of musical upsets or anything like that," Woodmansey insists. "There'd been financial upsets, but I thought we'd come through that. We'd got a raise halfway through the tour."

"I think I knew it wasn't over for me," Mike Garson admits. "I was very close with Woody. So, I was uncomfortable."

IN THE PLANNING STAGE OF COVERS ALBUM *Pin Ups*, one other musician's name was floated. Jack Bruce, five years after the break-up of Cream, was approached to replace Trevor Bolder as bassist, but declined the offer. Bolder was then invited back into the band, causing some tension during sessions at the Château d'Hérouville that ran through July-August '73.

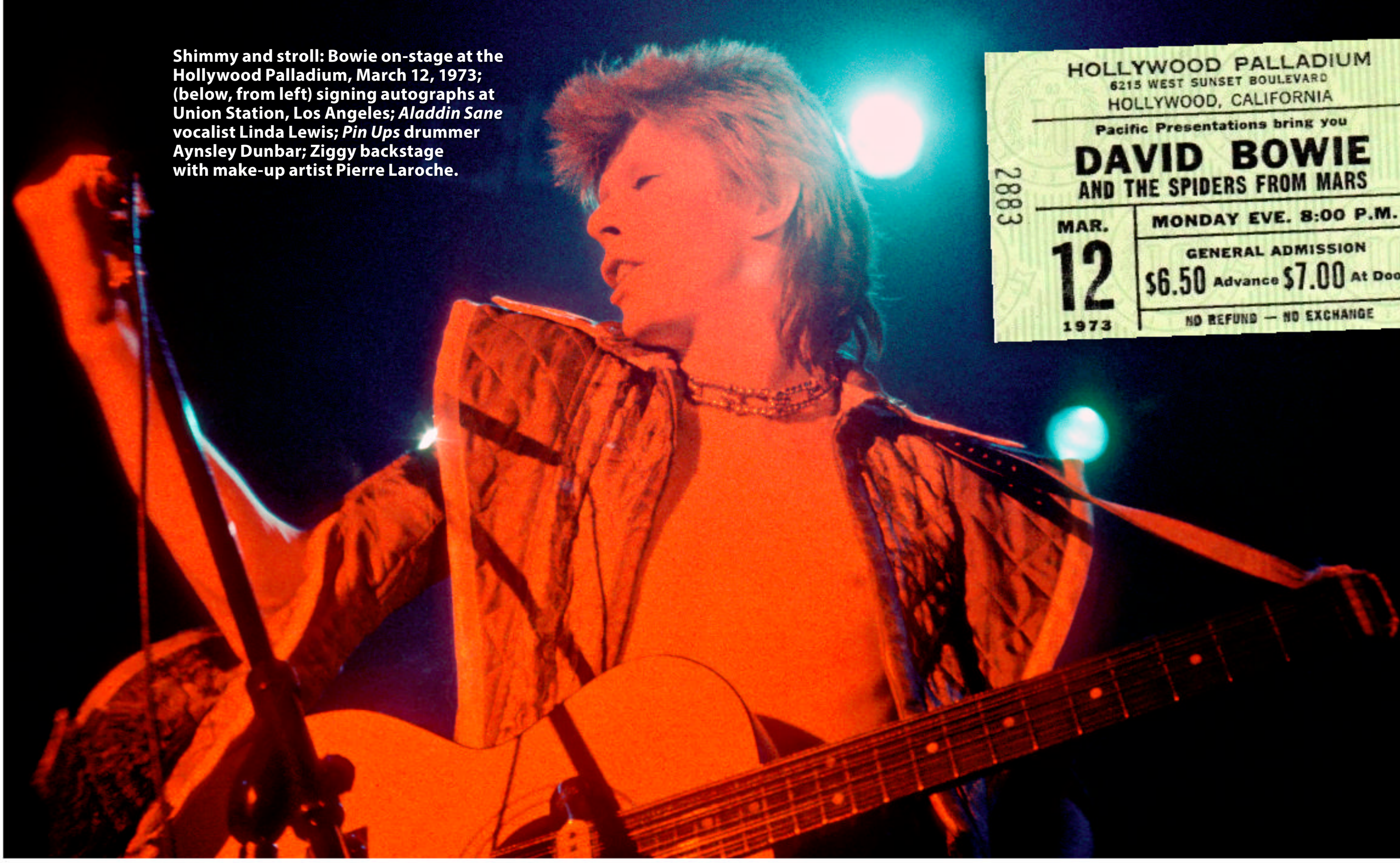
The residential recording facility, housed in a decaying 18th century mansion 24 miles northwest of Paris, had been recommended to Bowie by his friend Marc Bolan, who'd just recorded *The Slider* there – hipped in turn to the studio by Elton John, who'd nicknamed it his 'Honky Château'.

There, for the making of *Pin Ups*, replacing Woodmansey on drums, was Liverpool-born Aynsley Dunbar, who'd spent time in America playing with Frank Zappa and Lou Reed. "It was a little bittersweet because Woody wasn't there," says Garson. "But Aynsley was also a very good jazz drummer. We would jam a lot when we were recording, me and him, and we had a ball." ➢

Smoke 'em if you got 'em: Lulu and Bowie, 1973.

Alpha, Getty (5), Geoff MacCormack

Shimmy and stroll: Bowie on-stage at the Hollywood Palladium, March 12, 1973; (below, from left) signing autographs at Union Station, Los Angeles; *Aladdin Sane* vocalist Linda Lewis; *Pin Ups* drummer Aynsley Dunbar; Ziggy backstage with make-up artist Pierre Laroche.



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Strung out: Mick Ronson at Château d'Hérouville during the recording of *Pin Ups*, summer 1973, by Geoff MacCormack.

BROTHERS FROM ANOTHER PLANET

GEOFF MACCORMACK's new book peeks behind the scenes of a lifetime's friendship. By Tom Doyle.

GEOFF MACCORMACK HAD BEEN friends with David Jones since they'd met as 8-year-olds at Burnt Ash primary school in Bromley, and became the singer's near-constant travelling companion between 1973 and '75, performing backing vocal and percussion duties – latterly billed as 'Warren Peace' – on *Aladdin Sane*, *Pin Ups*, *Station To Station* and Bowie's Diamond Dogs/Soul tour of 1974. To that list of roles he declines to add aspiring professional photographer. Nevertheless, his striking images of Bowie during the period now feature in his photo book-cum-memoir, David Bowie: Rock 'N' Roll With Me.

"I call them holiday snaps," he laughs. "But I took enough of them."

Along with pictures from Bowie and MacCormack's Trans-Siberian Express journey through Russia in a break from the Ziggy Stardust Tour, and documentary shots of the singer at work on *Station To Station* at Cherokee Studios in LA in '75, MacCormack also snapped away when he joined Bowie on the set of Nicolas Roeg's The Man Who Fell To Earth in New Mexico that same year.

Geoff MacCormack (4)

History records that the singer-turned-film star was losing his grip on reality as his cocaine use rocketed. But MacCormack insists making the film was a happy and productive time for Bowie.

"He'd landed the gig of all gigs," MacCormack reflects. "He'd been in a film as an extra [The Virgin Soldiers, 1969]. But this whole thing was on his shoulders. It's one thing standing in a vocal booth in a recording studio and fucking up, but with a whole film crew…

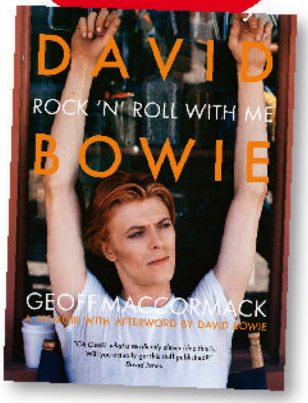
"So, he knew he had to be disciplined, and he was very disciplined, David. He was clean. Towards the end of the film, when he had nailed it, I think a bit of charlie came back (*laughs*). But basically, we lived a really nice, healthy life. And he got his head down. Because there would have been no other way to pull that off."

Bowie was certainly committed to his role as the Earth-crashed extra-terrestrial Thomas Jerome Newton, which for some scenes required him to wear enormous, painful contact lenses to lend his eyes a cat-like, alien appearance. "My God, they were huge, those fucking things," MacCormack splutters. "Just having those put in and kept in… because shooting a film, it's a long process… he deserved all the plaudits, just for that."

> "IT'S ONE THING STANDING IN A VOCAL BOOTH IN A RECORDING STUDIO AND FUCKING UP, BUT WITH A WHOLE FILM CREW..."
> **GEOFF MACCORMACK**

MacCormack's shots also capture how downtime on the set was spent playfully – particularly a series of images where he and Bowie are messing around with air pistols. "Nic must have been shooting something else," he explains, "and we're having a polystyrene cup shooting match. We were just having a laugh. That was my most important job, I think. Just moral support."

Bowie and MacCormack's



friendship was an enduring one, lasting 60 years. "You're at school with hundreds of people, but then only a few of you really have the same outlook," he offers. "You get where the other one's at, and what they mean. You don't have to explain stuff. The humour was really important… and trust… all those things that you need from a friendship."

Rock 'N' Roll With Me ends with revealing e-mail correspondence between the two in the last month of Bowie's life: light exchanges that only seemed heavy in retrospect. "I am so glad you've been my friend all these years," Bowie wrote. "I miss you lots – now fuck off!!"

MacCormack had asked Bowie to sign some of the photographs he'd taken of him down the years. He had a sense that his friend was feeling nostalgic.

"I think he was doing a certain amount of reminiscing," he says. "Maybe adding his life up pictorially. He sent me one of me and Coco [Schwab, Bowie's personal assistant] together. And another of me and Freddie [Burretti, clothes designer]. I think he was looking back fondly at the cast."

David Bowie: Rock 'N' Roll With Me is published by ACC Art Books, £30.

Alien invasion: (clockwise from main) Bowie sleeps through his journey to Moscow on the Trans-Siberian Express, April 1973; being fitted with extra-terrestrial eyes during The Man Who Fell To Earth, 1975; this polystyrene cup has seconds to live – film-shoot fun, New Mexico, 1975; Geoff MacCormack (left) and Bowie get reflective on-set of The Man Who Fell To Earth.

➢ Tony Defries says that the decision for Bowie to record an album of other people's songs was, once again, rooted in business. The manager was in dispute with Bowie's publishers Chrysalis Music over their failure to register the copyrights of his songs in America. Defries wanted to change the terms of their deal and take over the administration of the US publishing himself. As a result, he told the songwriter to go on strike.

"If somebody is reluctant to cooperate with you, or would rather litigate, the best thing is to show them an example of why they will lose," Defries argues. "And the best way to do that, frankly, was to make a hit record out of cover songs, that in effect said to Chrysalis, 'Look, if you don't come to terms with us, we'll go on doing this for the next two or three albums.' So, it only needed one lesson, and that was *Pin Ups*."

Luckily, Bowie had always wanted to record an album of covers. Conceptually, *Pin Ups* was to return him to "the '64-67 period of London" (as he scribbled in explanation on the LP's back cover). Notably, it was a time when he'd felt like an outsider, observing the happening club scene involving The Yardbirds, The Pretty Things and Pink Floyd, but failing to make an impression himself.

Recorded quickly and intensively, *Pin Ups* found Bowie taking some of his favourite 45s from the '60s and lending them a heavier 1970s treatment. Some tracks worked better than others: Them's Here Comes The Night became more anguished and desperate; The Who's I Can't Explain was sleazier and druggier. In other parts – see the bar band takes on The Mojos' Everything's Alright and the album's other Who number, Anyway, Anyhow, Anywhere – it was the sound of Bowie treading water.

Best were the moments when the experimental spirit of *Aladdin Sane* visited the sessions, such as on the energised remake of Pink Floyd's See Emily Play. Garson's unhinged piano made its own comeback on the extended outro, while Mick Ronson's string score toyed with dissonance before ending with a snatch of Bach's Partita for Violin No. 3. During the sessions, the guitarist conducted the French players himself.

"I remember Mick being quite nervous," says Geoff MacCormack. "He was a natural musician, but not only were these professional classical musicians, there was a language barrier as well."

Elsewhere, Ronson's strings were to bring magic to Bowie's aching rendition of Sorrow: closer in tone to The McCoys' reflective 1965 original than the thumping version The Merseys took to UK Number 4 in 1966. Again, Garson added a touch of the strange, his metallic-sounding part achieved by channelling the piano through a Leslie revolving speaker. It was the zenith of *Pin Ups* and set to provide Bowie with a UK Number 3 hit.

BREAKING UP THE *PIN UPS* SESSIONS PARTWAY through was a visit from Lulu. Bowie had first bumped into the Glaswegian singer and prime-time BBC TV star (her Saturday evening show was watched by 15-20 million viewers) at Western Sound Recorders studio in Los Angeles in the October of '72, on the day he rush-mixed The Stooges' *Raw Power*.

"Iggy Pop was scary," Lulu told this writer in 2015. "But David was like, 'Hey!' David was very warm."

The next time the two met was in the lobby of a Sheffield hotel during the Ziggy tour. "In walks an apparition, let me tell you," Lulu remembered. "Absolutely white-skinned, with not a great colour of orange hair. It was *so* dyed. And [he was] emaciated, y'know. He catches my eye and he comes straight over."

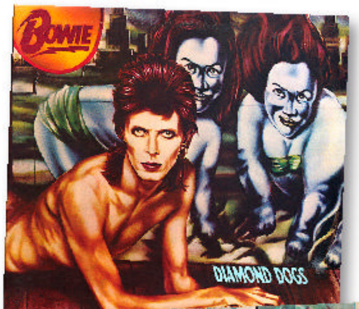
Not long after, the two briefly became an item, and Bowie suggested they work together. At the Château, Bowie and Ronson produced two tracks for Lulu, backed by the *Pin Ups* band: a rockier The Man Who Sold The World that reached UK Number 3 (b/w a gutsy Watch That Man) in January '74. In between takes, Bowie encouraged Lulu to smoke heavily to make her voice huskier.

"He used to smoke either Gitanes or Disque Bleu," she recalled. "He was hardcore. I used [to say], 'Oh, I better not smoke 'cos I've got to sing.' He said, 'On the contrary, get the fags out.'"

Watching on, Geoff MacCormack saw Lulu's long-term manager Marion Massey begin to fret about the bad influence Bowie ➢

< was having on her famous client. “Bless her, she was this kind of fur-coated, middle-aged woman,” he says. “*So* not rock’n’roll. I think Lulu wanted to be a bit messier, and *more* rock’n’roll. I’m not sure if her manager understood it. But I’m sure that was an interesting episode for Lulu, coming out of the mainstream into the Honky Château.”

The French studio was also the setting in autumn ’73 for the making of Mick Ronson’s first solo album, *Slaughter On 10th Avenue*. Engineer Dennis MacKay felt that the guitarist was reluctant to step into the spotlight. “I think he was being pushed into it,” he says. “Bowie and he worked perfectly together. But there was animosity at the latter end of that… like, jealousy. Bowie was getting all the credit.”



ENO
HERE COME THE WARM JETS

Bowie contributed lyrics to three tracks on *Slaughter*…, including the distinctly *Hunky Dory*-ish Growing Up And I’m Fine. MacKay remembers the singer arrived at the Château and recorded a stunning guide vocal for the track. But before the engineer could run off a cassette mix for himself, Ronson moved in.

“He walked over to the tape machine, and wiped Bowie’s vocal.”

THE PROMOTION OF *PIN UPS* involved no touring, but instead a US TV special filmed over October 18-20, in London. The 1980 Floor Show – its title a dig at George Orwell’s widow Sonia rejecting Bowie’s proposal to turn 1984 into a musical – was a multi-scene theatrical live performance staged at the Marquee on Wardour Street.

“The Marquee was ideal for that show,” says George Underwood. ‘Very nostalgic for him. Lots of memories.”

Defries thinks there was another motive for Bowie wanting to take over the legendary club. “It was also the place where David had famously failed to be successful,” he laughs. “So, there was a certain amount of, ‘I’m gonna get you back. I’m not only going to play the Marquee, I’m going to take over the whole venue. It’s going to be all Bowie, and then it’s going to be shown on national US TV.’ So it’s very much David saying, ‘OK, you didn’t like me at the Marquee. Look at me now.’”

Highlights included Bowie serenading a coquettish Amanda Lear with Sorrow and duetting with Marianne Faithfull (dressed as a nun) on Sonny & Cher’s I Got You Babe. Geoff MacCormack, who appeared on-stage as a backing vocalist, wasn’t entirely convinced by the whole affair. “But he was able to cobble things together really, really well,” he chuckles.

Conspicuously, the footage reveals Bowie as cocaine gaunt. In 2002, he admitted to MOJO, “My drug addiction really started… I suppose you could pin it down to the very last months of the Ziggy Stardust period.”

This in turn created problems between him and Tony Defries. “It was frequently said: ‘David, if you need to go into rehab, go into rehab,’” Defries states. “He wasn’t willing to step back. He wanted to carry on working, but to carry on working in a way where he was unduly stressed by addiction.”

But, for now, Bowie was on an almighty creative and commercial roll. *Pin Ups* was a huge success, equalling *Aladdin Sane*’s five weeks at UK Number 1. Looking back, Geoff MacCormack recognises that 1973 was a hugely transitional time in his friend’s career.

“It was pretty manic,” he says. “He was in a hurry. But I mean, he had the talent to do it. The output was unbelievable.”

Before the year was out, Bowie (*sans* Ronson) was back in the studio, this time Olympic in Barnes, for the making of *Diamond Dogs*, the Guy Peellaert-illustrated cover of which would see him cut a Ziggy-esque figure for the final time. Rebel Rebel was mostly in the can and 1984, with Garson’s harpsichord mimicking Stevie Wonder’s Superstition Clavinet, lit up a funkier route ahead. In the same building, another Bowie collaborator-to-be, Brian Eno, was mixing his pioneering art rock solo debut, *Here Come The Warm Jets*. New sounds were in the air. The future was calling. Ⓜ

Aladdin Sane 50th Anniversary half-speed mastered LP and picture disc LP are released on April 14 by Parlophone.

En vogue: Twiggy and Bowie strike a *Pin Ups* pose, Paris, 1973; (below) a *Pin Ups* promo photo-bomb billboard on Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles.

BEHIND THE MASKS

JUSTIN DE VILLENEUVE – the swinging snapper and manager/partner of supermodel Twiggy – recalls that freaky *Pin Ups* cover shoot.

TWIGGY AND I were staying in the Bel Air Hotel in LA when Peter Frampton visited us and brought along a copy of *Aladdin Sane*. One of Bowie’s lyrics [from Drive-In Saturday] mentioned “Twig the Wonder Kid”. Apparently, he was a fan. When we arrived back in London, we met up with David and he mentioned he’d love to be on the cover of Vogue. I then spent a few weeks persuading the editor, Bea Miller, that it would be great to have David and Twiggy on a Vogue cover. Eventually she agreed. Twiggy and I flew to Paris where David was recording *Pin Ups* and I booked a studio to take the portrait.

When Twiggy and Bowie sat in front of me I realised we had a problem. Twiggy and myself had just returned from the Bahamas and she had a dark tan. David was as white as a ghost. They looked weird. The problem was resolved when the make-up artist Pierre Laroche and myself decided to draw masks on their faces of the same colours. When I showed David the Polaroid of the portrait he loved it and asked if he could have it as the cover of his new album. I replied, “But this is a special commission for Vogue!” I then asked him how many albums he thought he would sell. “A million,” he replied. I realised Vogue would sell about 80,000 copies, which would soon be forgotten. I agreed David could use it. Vogue never spoke to me again!

THE LAST PINUP CONTEST!
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BOWIE PINUPS
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★MIDNIGHT SPECIAL STARRING DAVID BOWIE★CHANNEL 4★NOV. 16,1973★
et Yours at Discount
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Records, Tapes & Things

Justin De Villeneuve, Getty

MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

EDITED BY **JENNY BULLEY** jenny.bulley@bauermedia.co.uk

OSCAR'S
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MURRAY A. LIGHTBURN
ONCE UPON A TIME

IAN HUNTER
DEFIANCE PART 1
R-DUR BAND INT.
Mudhoney
Plastic Eternity
DAVI
the pretty things
The Complete Studio Albums: 1965-2020

> “May was hauled off stage by eager girls in High Wycombe.”
>
> **JIM WIRTH RECOUNTS CHAOS IN THE WAKE OF THE PRETTY THINGS. REISSUES P96.**

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Lost in music

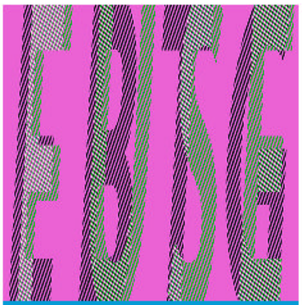
The distinctive pop duo release their first album in 24 years, a homage to love and the dancefloor. By **Lucy O'Brien**. Illustration by **Walter Newton**.

Everything But The Girl

★★★★

Fuse

BUZZIN' FLY/VIRGIN. CD/DL/LP



AFTER A LONG HIATUS during which Tracey Thorn wrote four non-fiction books, Ben Watt focused on DJ-production work, and both released six solo albums between them, UK pop's enduring pair have re-formed to create an album that fuses emotional strength with their musical obsessions.

They have certainly benefited from time apart. Thorn has said that singing on their last album, 1999's trip-hop-infused *Temperamental*, felt like guesting on someone else's record, but with *Fuse* her voice is front, central and confidently clear in the mix. So too is their cleverly sculpted sonic overload, weaving in and out of evocative lyrical imagery and rhythmic flow. It sounds like they are enjoying each other's company. No more the quieter introspection and reflection of solo tracks like Hormones or Fever Dream – here Thorn and Watt are a combined force, capturing the giddy euphoria and release of the club experience.

> "It sounds like they are enjoying each other's company, capturing the euphoria of the club experience."

BACK STORY: KARAOKE POWER

- Standout song Karaoke was inspired by a work trip to San Francisco when, trying to stay up and break his jetlag, Ben Watt went with an American friend to a late-night karaoke bar. "Some old guys got up and tried singing Jackson Browne [above] and Dylan and the place was unmoved," Watt remembers. "But then around midnight the regulars started to arrive, and I realised that it was a little scene on its own. And the place just took off. I loved this microcosmic environment. I showed the lyrics to Tracey but it wasn't complete, just three descriptive verses. Then she thought, 'That makes me think about why I sing', and wrote the hooklines. It was a real collaborative lyric." For Thorn, it's a song just about music. "What do we sing for? What does it mean to people? Is there a difference between karaoke and other kinds of performance? Well no, there isn't. Really everything's karaoke, we're all trying to express something."

Getty

Opener Nothing Left To Lose articulates this concept beautifully, with Thorn's voice deep and disembodied within the sub-bass and fractured beats, importuning a lover to "kiss me while the world decays." There is an end-of-days feel to the song, where wordplay and repetition are used like mantras, a hypnotic approach that is echoed throughout the album. Run A Red Light explores the club world from a different angle, the resident DJ who likes to, "Keep it simple/Keep it the same crowd", but who is longing for something bigger and better. Watt adds to the sense of containment with iPhone piano loops that morph into a looped bank of choral sound *à la* 10cc's I'm Not In Love, only much more compressed than the lush melancholy of the 1970s hit. "When we listened back in the studio, we did think, Oh that sounds quite 10cc," says Watt. "But it wasn't intentional. I wanted the song to end with a dreamlike ether."

From debut *Eden*'s bossa nova jazz to the American pop soul of the Tommy LiPuma-produced *The Language Of Life*, to the liquid drum'n'bass of 1996's *Walking Wounded*, Everything But The Girl have always experimented with different influences. Caution To The Wind, for example, with its clapping synth beats and celestial lyrics, summons up late-'80s New York garage and the joyful defiance of Turntable Orchestra. And the elemental dancefloor chug of Forever reverberates with a Mirwais-style mixture of French house groove and lyrics laced with existential ache. "Who'll be around/When everything burns down?" Thorn sings. "Give me something I can hold onto forever." These tracks are propelled by a sense of urgency and resistance to over-complication, simplifying music to its essence.

There is also an acceptance of life's chaos. The song When You Mess Up, delivered in the form of advice to wayward offspring (the couple have three children, now in their early twenties), disintegrates towards the end into a glitchy drift of piano loops, distortion and fluff. "Christ, we all mess up," Thorn reassures. From there, a natural segue into Time And Time Again, where trap beats and warped vocals tell the stories of people caught in repetitive love scenarios of loneliness and self-isolation, always hoping but never achieving what they yearn for.

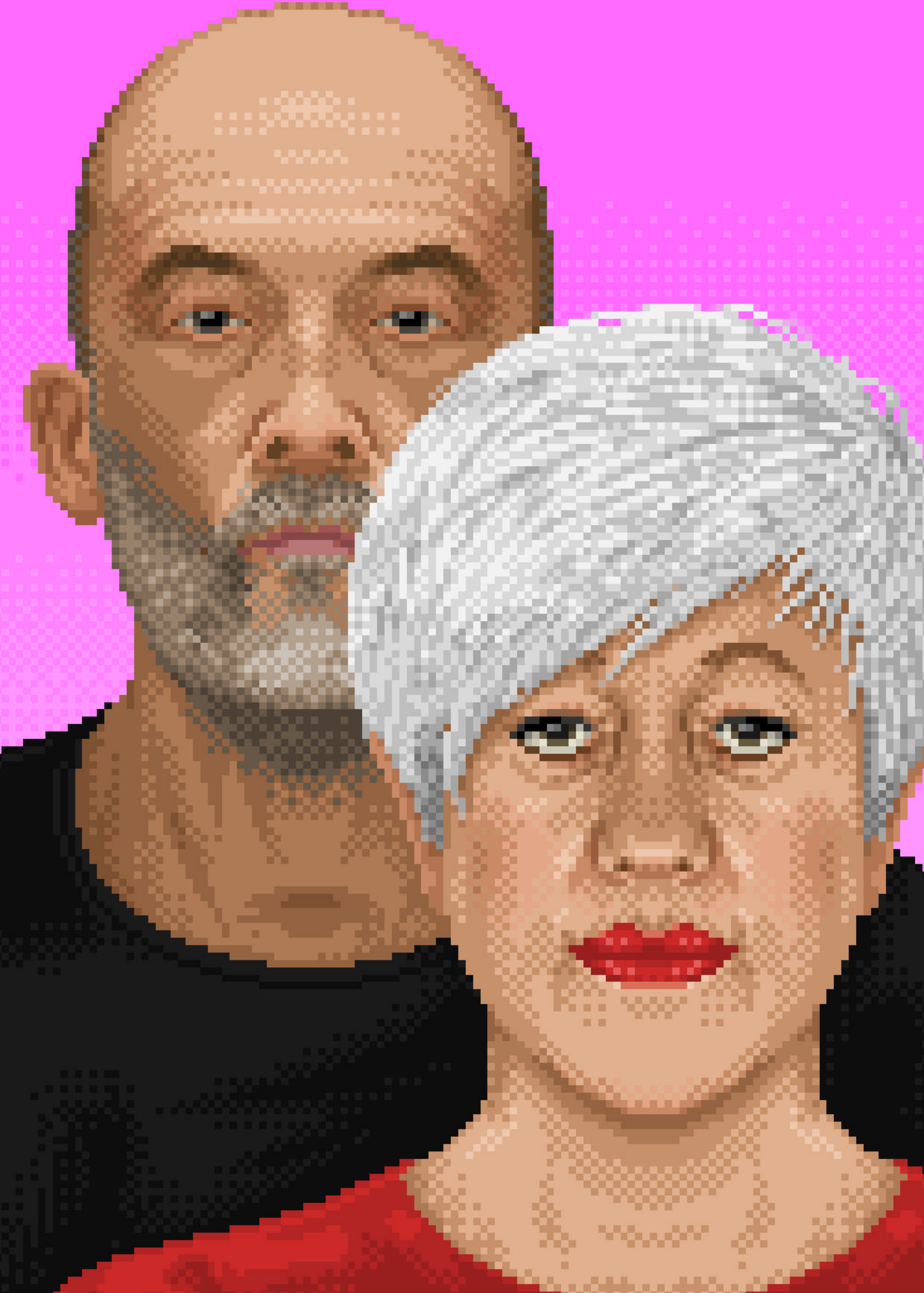
EBTG often bring a keen social observation to their lyrics, and *Fuse* is populated with characters seeking escape, abandonment, and self-release. Like the guy in No One Knows We're Dancing, whose "parking tickets litter his Fiat Cinquecento", or the girl who "works weekdays in a pet shop", or Peter behind the bar with a lawyer father working (in a nod to M's Pop Muzik) "London, Paris, Rome." While Thorn sings about these weekend clubbers "trapped in a feeling" on the dancefloor, enveloping synth chords create a majestic sense of space and freedom.

In one way, this album could be heard as a trip through the night, from stepping out early evening to messy abandonment in the club, to rebuilding and rediscovering the self at the end of the night. The track Lost captures a mid-rave moment of emotional falling apart at the seams, as compulsive thoughts intrude; Thorn itemises each thing that has been lost – "I lost my mind last week… my bags… my biggest client… the perfect job… the plot." Heightened by chiming cyclical synth notes, the lyrics are delivered with a Zen shrug. Until we hear about a deeper, underlying and more significant loss, repeated three times in the final phrase: "I lost my mother."

EBTG often make deft work of the personal and political, or the linking of one's internal monologue with a broader context. With the track Interior Space, they take the mood off the dancefloor and into a wild seascape, incorporating field recordings by their engineer Bruno Ellingham of Druidstone Beach, a secluded spot in Pembrokeshire enclosed on three sides by steep cliffs. This is a high point of the album, a spectral piece of sonic architecture that melds, with Arca-like precision, Thorn and Watt's voices into one elemental flow.

That vocal interplay between them continues into the final track Karaoke, only here it separates into call and response – hers deep and soulful, his light and harmonising – like a charged conversation. This is their 'lost in music' moment, a summation of why they do what they do, and how Thorn, terrified of performing live for several years, rediscovers what she loves about singing. There is wry observation of a slow karaoke night, when "I was in the groove/Someone tried some Dylan/But the place remained unmoved", and how this can be changed with the right songs, good pitch, a communal mood and an invitation: "If you want you can own it/Why not take a shot?" As the record concludes, bathed in low-slung beats and shimmering sound, there is a sense that the dancefloor and the karaoke bar offer safety, places where nagging fears and anxiety can be banished.

EBTG SPEAK! TRACEY AND BEN ON FEELING FREE, GOING DEEP, AND BEING ON THE SAME PAGE AGAIN.



World of exteriors/ interiors: EBTG's Ben Watt and Tracey Thorn are really clicking again.

"Wandering in the reverbs..."

Tracey Thorn and Ben Watt speak to **Lucy O'Brien.**

Why did you decide to record an album after a 24-year break?

Tracey Thorn: "We thought, Let's make some music for the sheer fun of it. And if it doesn't work, no one ever needs to hear it. We had the freedom of not being under any pressure to deliver an album. No one was waiting for us, or breathing down our neck, so we could literally follow our own moments of excitement."

How has your musical relationship evolved?

TT: "We'd both done a lot of solo work in that gap in-between, so we each got used to being the boss and making all the decisions. When we came back together, we had a certain amount of trepidation, thinking, OK, how's that going to work? Actually, we really clicked into a liberating collaborative thing, being a lot freer with each other than we used to be in the old days. When the kids were younger, we felt, We're already a couple, we're being parents, and to work together would be so intense. Something had to be taken out of the equation."

Ben Watt: "If we were going to get back together, it had to be with a common good idea. For a long time we were moving in different orbits. I was very involved in DJing, running a label and remixing, and Tracey was making Christmas albums, and I went back to my songwriter roots for five years, experimenting with guitars, working with Bernard Butler."

TT: "Then Ben had some experimental music he started working on which was more electronic, and the album emerged from that. It caught fire and took off. We got so excited, realising we were on the same page."

Is *Fuse* about abandonment, literally getting lost in the music?

BW: "Often you can't really work out what a record is until you have some distance on it, so we don't want to be too prescriptive. Everyone is coming to it fresh with some unique interpretations. We try to make it emotionally direct, to invite people in. Because of the production that we use, which is more minimalist, it leaves a lot of room in the song for people to place themselves. We don't have a Phil Spector Wall Of Sound, where we're saying, 'This is it, take it from us.' We're welcoming people into this experience, and you can almost feel yourself wandering around in the reverbs."

TT: "The record has a strong exterior/interior thing going on. There are really extrovert euphoric moments on the up-tempo tracks, like the song No One Knows We're Dancing, which is a kind of hymn to Lazy Dog, a club Ben used to run at Notting Hill Arts Club on a Sunday afternoon. When I sing that song, I think of ghostly characters who are still down in the basement, even though the club's long finished. There is definitely a vibe of that celebratory club experience, but the lyrics also go very deep internally."

Arooj Aftab, Vijay Iyer & Shahzad Ismaily

★★★★

Love In Exile

VERVE. CD/DL/LP

Brooklyn-based Pakistani singer and electronic-tinged jazzers achieve intoxicating synergy.

Like *Vulture Prince*, Arooj Aftab's critically lauded 2021 third solo album, *Love In Exile* is indebted to the Urdu ghazal tradition of sorrowful song, albeit effectively unshackled from cultural convention. While keyboardist Vijay Iyer and bassist/Moog player Shahzad Ismaily summon a succession of iridescent, jazz-ambient drones and stimulating pianistic inventions, the compelling centre here is always Aftab's extraordinary voice, a thing of languorously modulating beauty which seems to sweep in from a different, more elevated human plane, draping the album's seven minimalist essays in dreamy, ineffably moving Urdu opulence. Gorgeous opener To Remain/ To Return is typical, her drowsy ululations drifting like incense across glimmering piano arpeggios and burbling bass, while standout Haseen Thi's shimmering Fender Rhodes frames further aching vocal extemporisations that sound like a heavenly conjoining of Cocteau Twin Liz Fraser and Abida Parveen, Pakistan's 'Queen of Sufi Music'.

David Sheppard

Billy Valentine And The Universal Truth

★★★★

Billy Valentine And The Universal Truth

FLYING DUTCHMAN/ACID JAZZ. CD/DL/LP

Veteran soul singer's powerful protest album.

This LP is a tale of two resurrections. Firstly, it marks the resurgence of Billy Valentine, best remembered as one-half of The Valentine Brothers, an Ohio duo whose Reaganomics critique Money's Too Tight (To Mention) was repurposed for a hit by Simply Red in 1985. Secondly, the album is released on the revived Flying Dutchman imprint, the indie jazz label founded by Coltrane producer Bob Thiele which is now brought back to life by his son, Bob Thiele Jr. Together, Thiele and Valentine serve up an exquisite collection of R&B message songs that have subtly been reframed with a jazz twist to reflect dystopian developments in contemporary American life. Valentine's weathered, plaintive voice breathes new life into old tunes by War, Curtis Mayfield, Eddie Kendricks and Stevie Wonder, but the standout is a bleakly eerie version of Prince's '80s lament, Sign O' The Times.

Charles Waring

The Long Ryders

★★★★

September November

CHERRY RED. CD/DL

Emotive follow-up to 2019's *Psychedelic Country Soul*.

This is the first Long Ryders album since the death of their bassist Tom Stevens in 2021 and his memory looms large over a terrific set that explores the themes of loss, friendship, aging and legacy, in 12 songs that are both familiar sounding and something new. Flying Down is typical Long Ryders, with its 12-string guitar jangle and rich harmonies uniting as they sing of the possibilities life affords us that are only glimpsed in dreams. That's What They Say About Love introduces a jazz verve, the group stretching into Hot Club De Paris territory with Django-esque guitar and Grappelli-like violin, while album closer Flying Out Of London In The Rain, a fractured cover of a Stevens solo song, features his daughter's multi-tracked vocals and poignantly marks the end of one era and the start of another.

Lois Wilson

London Brew

★★★★

London Brew

CONCORD. CD/LP

***Bitches Brew* tribute album sees London's finest jazzers run the voodoo down.**

Rescued from a planned live, 50th anniversary salute to Miles Davis's gnarly electro-jazz landmark, but in no sense a 'cover version', these studio recordings from 2020 cleave to its spirit. A 12-piece band make a big, billowing sound; two drummers collude funkily; electric guitars and saxes clash and wail; and the collage element of the original LP is echoed by DJ Benji B's live sampling. While it lacks the hostility of its role model or its strident central voice, there's intrigue aplenty. On the Can-tastic title track, Shabaka Hutchings channels *BB*'s Bennie Maupin on bass clarinet. Mor Ning Prayers, with Theon Cross's stalking tuba stabs and guitarist Dave Okumu's spooked shredding, is another highlight. Syd Arthur's violin virtuoso Raven Bush takes the lead on closer, Raven Flies Low. It's a kind of jazz – on an ambitious scale, drawing dark beauty from chaos – it would be nice to hear more than twice a century.

Danny Eccleston

Caroline Rose

★★★★

The Art Of Forgetting

NEW WEST. CD/DL/LP

Loss and heartache foment country-pop auteur's return.

"It was like therapy," says Caroline Rose, of these songs that arrived in a torrent following "a series of heartbreaking events". But while Rose's fifth album is undeniably cathartic, the ever-inventive singer/ songwriter raises her agonies to high art, and compelling entertainment. Rose's grief and longing are set to a diverse soundtrack: minimal electro-pop (The Kiss), keening chanson (Jill Says, dedicated to her titular therapist), symphonic Gregorian choruses (beautifully overwrought opener Love/Lover/Friend). Her wit remains intact throughout, lending these confessionals a crucial lightness without deadening their impact; Miami sees Rose struggle to balance her broken heart with the weight her sadness puts on her parents, drolly musing, "Just because I wanna kill everything moving/Doesn't mean I'm losing my marbles". Never self-indulgent, *The Art Of Forgetting* swings between joy and darkness with a boldness and coherence that is a marvel.

Stevie Chick

Billy Valentine: still telling it like it is.

Edward Bishop

Tunnel of love: Lana Del Rey moves outside her habitual emotional twilight to seek a new dawn.

Subterranean heartsick blues

Queen of drama's ninth album digs deep. By **Victoria Segal**.

Lana Del Rey

★★★★

Did You Know That There's A Tunnel Under Ocean Blvd

INTERSCOPE. CD/DL/LP

Did you know that there's a tunnel under Ocean Blvd
Lana Del Rey
Mike Hermosa
Jack Antonoff
Drew Erickson
Zach Dawes
Benji
Jon Batiste
Bleachers
Father John Misty
Judah Smith
Tommy Genesis
SYML

"ASK ME WHY I'm like this," sings Lana Del Rey on A&W, as if anyone who has come near her music in the past decade needs a prompt. Since the 2011 release of *Video Games*, Del Rey has been a one-woman think-piece, making everything about *her* yet retaining her mystery, the just-out-of-focus centre of attention.

Did You Know That There's A Tunnel Under Ocean Blvd offers another chance to discover what lies beneath, a state-of-the-artist address that doubles down on previous preoccupations – bad men, bad drugs, bad choices – but also tries hard to grasp a world that exists beyond a fly-smeared Mustang windscreen or a dirty motel door. It's beautiful, unveiled, audacious – at times to the point of recklessness – a record that moves outside her habitual emotional twilight to seek a new dawn. It deals with family, grief and (dangerous though it is for a woman like her) hope, finding shades of sadness beyond the traditional and-it-felt-like-a-kiss misery. If it wasn't for a couple of unfortunate lulls and longueurs, the odd dubious creative choice, it could easily look *Norman Fucking Rockwell* in the eye.

One of those blips is an excerpt of a sermon about fidelity by her pastor, controversial Los Angeles superchurch leader Judah Smith; the background laughs and rustles suggest Del Rey was recording from a pew. Yet from gospel-tinged opener The Grants, a song that immediately sets up the theme of family by mentioning her sister's newborn baby and her grandmother's last smile, it seems Del Rey's spiritual engagement stems from harsh experience. She sings of bereavement, of deathbed goodbyes, while the piano evokes Kate Bush's *Aerial* mourning songs. One song is called Grandfather Please Stand On The Shoulders Of My Father While He's Deep-Sea Fishing, a gauzy hymn yearning for protection, for continuity.

While Kintsugi relies on a slightly overworked metaphor and a nod to Leonard Cohen's Anthem to explore grief, the remarkable Fingertips triggers a true jolt of sadness as Del Rey addresses her siblings: "Charlie, stop smoking/Caroline will you be with me?/Will the baby be all right?/Will I have one of my own?" There's a lot going on here, anxieties just pouring from her. She worries about genetics, about the little landmines lurking in DNA; it is so heartfelt, her description of crying in the shower before performing for the Prince of Monaco doesn't land that awkwardly. "They say there's irony in the music/It's a tragedy," she sings, utterly believably. "I see nothing Greek in it."

Moments of old-school romance and almost manic levity remain. Let The Light In, a duet with Father John Misty, has an oleaginous vintage charm, all Spanish guitar, candle-waxy keyboard and listening to The Beatles in bed; Peppers, boosted by a fabulous hook from rapper Tommy Genesis, has Del Rey crazy in love: "I take off all my clothes/Dance naked for the neighbours."

Yet that display isn't more revealing than Fishtail's Southern gothic – "you wanted me sadder" – or the astonishing A&W, Del Rey taking herself apart until she's "invisible, a ghost now", erased by the rape culture around her. Starting like downbeat Fleetwood Mac, it topples into nightmarish trip-hop, her own dial-spinning I Am The Walrus, ending in a dysfunctional playground chant. As ever with Del Rey, you could lose weeks cross-referencing every allusion – hair-plaiting, Forensic Files, The Roadrunner Café – not least when she closes the record by merging Covid-era romance Taco Truck with 2019's Venice Bitch. It's a dangerous game, evoking past glories, but it's proof she's on the kind of form that can reckon with her past rather than just being doomed to repeat it. "Maybe I'm just like this," she says on A&W, answering her own question. She leaves no doubt that might sometimes be a curse, but on this evidence, what a gift, too.

backdrops draw on jazz, blues, folk and vaudeville, double daring her audience to follow her next flight of fancy.

Andy Cowan

Everything counts: Depeche Mode's Martin Gore and Dave Gahan crash hard into mortality.

Anton Corbijn

Depeche Mode

★★★★

Memento Mori

COLUMBIA. CD/DL/LP

Electro-veterans rage hard on grief-stricken fifteenth album.

AS THE first record that Depeche Mode have made since the death of Andrew Fletcher in May 2022, *Memento Mori* is inevitably infused with a deep melancholy, Anton Corbijn's video for bittersweet single Ghosts Again showing Martin Gore and Dave Gahan embroiled in a Seventh Seal-style game of chess. Crashing so hard into mortality seems to have energised them, however, the duo facing down the inescapable strife and sadness of the human condition by pulling themselves up to their full electro-rock height. From forbidding opener My Cosmos Is Mine, these songs have an impressive vehemency, whether showcasing uncanny AI balladry on Soul With Me, industrial wall-of-sound on Speak To Me and People Are Good ("keep fooling yourself"), electro-pop dissociation on My Favourite Stranger (one of four Richard Butler co-writes), or hydraulically pumped Brel-drama on Don't Say You Love Me. The dying of the light has taken a hell of a beating.

Victoria Segal

Various

★★★★

Stoned Cold Country

BROKEN BOW. CD/DL/LP

Country stars doff a Stetson to 60 years of the Stones.

There's always been a country element to The Rolling Stones since Gram turned Keith onto the possibilities of being a cosmic cowboy. And here, in case there was any doubt, 14 country acts – from stadium-fillers Brooks & Dunn to vocalists Little Big Town to up-and-coming firebrand Marcus King – bring the twang to the Glimmer Twins. The Brothers Osborne team up with The War And Treaty for a testifying version of It's Only Rock'n'Roll (But I Like It) with Stax-like horns; Jimmie Allen gives a typically slick reading of Miss You; Elle King's Tumbling Dice turns down the blues and ramps up the country; The Zac Brown Band brilliantly switch Brian Jones's sitar out for a fiddle on Paint It Black; and Steve Earle simply owns Angie. The tracklisting may be a bit route one, but the music is far from it.

Andy Fyfe

The No Ones

★★★

My Best Evil Friend

YEP ROC. CD/DL/LP

Second LP from R.E.M.-assisted powerpop love-in.

The No Ones are former R.E.M. stunt guitarist Scott McCaughey and friends, including Norwegian multi-instrumentalist Arne Kjelsrud Mathisen. The follow-up to 2020's *The Great Lost No Ones Album* finds them accessorised by R.E.M.'s Peter Buck and the Bangles' Debbi Petersen, and celebrating their idols (Phil Ochs, Nick Lowe, the quiet Beatle) with songs that sound a bit like them. Available as an 18-track double or a snappier, better single, it's witty and fun but sometimes a bit too self-referential. Set List reveals the dark art ("One – big opening number, two – a song that's not too hard to mess up…"), KLIV tips a trucker's cap to their favourite Santa Clara radio station, and Song For George is a song for who else but George Harrison. Think: Big Star, then, with zesty top notes of The Replacements and *Document*-era R.E.M., while Throwdown In Whispertown contains the great tongue-in-cheek lyric: "Sugar pie, so high, she sings like a trampoline…"

Mark Blake

Talbot, Molina, Lofgren & Young

★★★

All Roads Lead Home

NYA. CD/DL/LP

Crazy Horse members make non-Crazy Horse album.

When is Neil Young & Crazy Horse not Neil Young & Young & Crazy? When they're Talbot, Molina, Lofgren & Young, releasing an album of their own tracks without playing together. Confused? Well, as a marketing idea it might sound cynical, especially as Young contributes just one song – a live solo version of Song Of The Seasons from 2021's *Barn* LP – while the others offer three apiece. Ralph Molina's Just For You is a beautiful piano ballad that might be better without the cheesy sax, while Go With Me is classic slow and heavy Nils Lofgren. Best, though, is Billy Talbot's opening Rain, a testament to carrying on regardless of the crap you're facing. OK, so it's hardly Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, and not even a group, but such is the longevity and depth of these men's association that *All Roads Lead Home* holds together surprisingly well.

Andy Fyfe

Thomas Bangalter

★★★

Mythologies

ERATO/WARNER CLASSICS. CD/DL/LP

Ex-Daft Punk man's classical ballet score.

It's 26 years since Thomas Bangalter, with his Daft Punk partner Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo, released *Homework*. That debut and its 2001 successor, *Discovery*, secured the Parisians their status as enigmatic dance music auteurs. You may not have pinned Bangalter to compose a classical ballet a quarter of a century later, but then unconventionality has long been a character trait. A collaboration with Ballet Preljocaj and the Ballet de l'Opéra de Bordeaux, *Mythologies* premiered in July 2022 and contains no trace of electronics. Instead, in the gathering string storm of L'Accouchment you'll find Góreckian emotional heft. The influence of post-war American minimalism, from Glass to Hermann, is evident throughout, from the staccato phrases that stud Icare to the tense orchestration of Les Gorgones. That progenitor of modern movie soundtracks, Gustav Mahler, perhaps looms most distinctively over *Mythologies* and its emotive passages. Devoid of da funk it may be, but the scale and scope here are impressive.

Stephen Worthy

The Zombies

★★★

Different Game

COOKING VINYL. CD/DL/LP

Seventh LP and follow-up to 2015's *Still Got That Hunger*.

Up to now, *Odessey And Oracle* has been the touchstone for any new material from the re-formed Zombies. Here, though, they've moved away from their trademark '60s Brit psych-pop, with co-founders Colin Blunstone and Rod Argent exploring rockier terrain. It's likely a result of the material being written on the road while touring the US then recorded mostly live, each song put down in three to four hours in Argent's Hampshire home studio. But whether it's the title track (think A Whiter Shade Of Pale in a yacht rock setting), Dropped, Reeling & Stupid which veers into jazz fusion with Oblivion Express-styled piano soloing, or I Want To Fly, a chamber ballad with ornate strings, this is a still-hungry group flexing their creative muscles.

Lois Wilson

Cecile McLorin Salvant

★★★★

Mélusine

NONESUCH. CD/DL/LP

US singer shows full range on mostly French set, with detours into Occitan and Haitian Kreyol.

Loosely based on the folkloric legend of a woman who turns into a half-snake as a result of a childhood curse, *Mélusine* retains the intellectual curiosity of Salvant's jittery, questing catalogue. Her instinct for experimentation defines playful takes on Léo Ferré's Est-ce Ainsi Que Les Hommes Vivent? and Charles Trenet's La Route Enchantée (the latter dipping into lower vocal registers) that prove apt vehicles for Salvant's intimate, storytelling style. Elsewhere, the balladry of originals Fenestra and the madrigal-like title track flex against wilder a cappella and hand-drums duets that feel like a pared-down Crazy House. As with 2022's *Ghost Song*, Salvant's imaginative

Brave heart

Mother Courage returns: Sylvie Simmons hails her new album.

Natalie Merchant

★★★★

Keep Your Courage

NONESUCH. CD/DL/LP

IT'S BEEN 30 years since Merchant announced on MTV that she was quitting 10,000 Maniacs to go it alone. She'd had it, she said, with "art by committee. I didn't want to have to consult with all these other people." She kept her word. Since *Tigerlily* (1995), her five-times platinum solo debut, she's led one of the most individualistic careers of any artist of her standing. Her subsequent work has encompassed Shakespearean sonnets, children's stories, politics, the poems of Robert Graves, indie pop and folk music, traditional, original and alternative, while her record releases seem unrelated to anyone's schedule but her own. *Keep Your Courage*, Merchant's ninth studio LP, is her first of all-new material in nine years. It's also her most beautiful in decades.

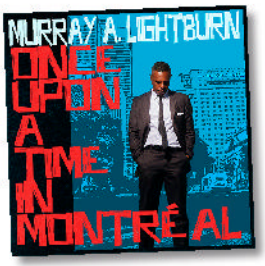
Recorded in a studio in Vermont with Merchant as producer and Joan Of Arc as patron saint/cover girl, it has 10 songs, several five, six or seven minutes long but beguiling enough you wouldn't complain if they were longer still. It's densely musical. For the most part it's a textured and nuanced blend of folk instrumentation and classical orchestration. There was orchestration on her last LP, *Butterfly* (2017) – new arrangements of largely old songs – but not as complex and layered as here. Literally layered: the result of making an album with two dozen musicians and seven classical string arrangers when pandemic protocols dictated a maximum of five in the studio at a time. Along with her core band are members of Lankum and another Irish group, Lúnasa, a horn section, woodwind, backing vocalists and singer Abena Koomson-Davis, with whom Merchant duets on Come On, Aphrodite. Overall, it sounds cohesive, but varied too. And, given the epic cast, remarkably uncluttered, with its focus on the voice and the song.

Lyrically, the word "'love' recurs in these songs no less than 26 times if you listen start to finish," Merchant writes in her linernotes. Like the arrangements, love appears in a variety of moods: there's the childlike, reminiscing Sister Tilly, with its Chelsea girls and Beatles-y strings; the soulful gospel Tower Of Babel with horns and backing singers; and at its most heartbreakingly lovely, Narcissus, which ends with the repeated plea, "Will you let me take you home?"

Home was where Merchant wrote all 10 songs during a period of personal and global fear and isolation, her liners explain: "But this is not an album about the Coronavirus. [It's] a song cycle that maps the journey of a courageous heart", through the toughest and most solitary of times. As she sings over a slowly picked acoustic guitar in bleak-midwintry closer The Feast Of Saint Valentine, "Keep your courage, keep your faith. Love will set you free."

Natalie Merchant: keeping the faith, spreading the love.

Claire Rosen


MURRAY A. LIGHTBURN
ONCE UPON A TIME IN MONTRÉAL

Murray A. Lightburn

★★★★

Once Upon A Time In Montréal

DANGERBIRD. DL/LP

The Dears' frontman salutes his late jazz-saxophonist dad.

Murray A. Lightburn's John Coltrane-infatuated father was a present but uncommunicative figure; a Belize-born talent who made a new life for his wife and kids in Canada. Packing elegant strings and able, Montreal-based jazz musicians, his son's third solo LP comes on like a tender elegy, habit and his father's late-onset Alzheimer's having precluded such intimacy between them until now. Tapping influences such as Bill Withers and Al Green and shedding all trace of The Dears' very British-sounding indie, Lightburn channels his grief into classy, soulful arrangements wholly tailored to his late father's tastes beyond bebop. What transpires is special, Lightburn junior digging deep. Witness Dumpster Gold, a wistful, shimmering thing named for some salvaged/treasured possessions of his dad's, or the punchy, Isaac Hayes-like Oh But My Heart Has Never Been Dark.

James McNair

Rick Wakeman

★★★

A Gallery Of The Imagination

MADFISH. CD/DL

The Caped Crusader celebrates his cuddly side.

RICK WAKEMAN
A GALLERY OF THE IMAGINATION

Here's Rick the showman at his least showy – a dozen self-composed tracks, mostly with his band, some solo, that veer from classical lite through pop to prog lite. The former journeyer to the centre of the Earth is happy now with A Day Spent On The Pier, a jaunty nursery rhyme of a tune inspired by genteel Southwold, Suffolk. There's nothing unpleasant here, not much that rises above pleasant, although Hayley Sanderson's warm, characterful vocals add lustre to all she touches. Oddly, the best moments are kept to the end: Visitation, with Sanderson adding some high-altitude Kate Bush-like drama, and The Eyes Of A Child, all pensive loveliness, with gentle Gypsy guitar and Wakeman's most affecting piano solo. The old boy can still raise his game when he chooses.

John Bungey

Peter Case

★★★★

Doctor Moan

SUNSET BLVD. CD/DL/LP

Case follows *The Midnight Broadcast* (2021) with a sixteenth solo album.

PETER CASE
DOCTOR MOAN

One of the great US songwriters, Case took a side turn on his last album of mostly covers. Here, there are 11 new originals – one a solo instrumental – and several of them are among his best: Downtown Nowhere's Blues; The Flying Crow; Girl In Love With A Shadow; Ancient Sunrise; Brand New Book Of Rules. Case plays acoustic guitar on just one song, Wandering Days. For the rest he's on piano – old-school, left hand, blues-piano-style. Gospel too: Eyes Of Love and Give Me Five Minutes More might have something to do with the time Case has spent at the St John Coltrane African Orthodox Church since moving back to San Francisco. There's a B3 organ (Chris Joyner) and bass (Jonny Flaugher) hovering nearby, but mostly it's lean and all the better for it. Case knows that his songs don't need perfume and a clean suit.

Sylvie Simmons

Keith & Julie Tippett

★★★★

Couple In Spirit: Sound On Stone

DISCUS. CD/DL

Emotional return to 1987's Couple In Spirit project. A meditation on grief.

Couple In Spirit: Sound On Stone is a truly extraordinary piece put together by Julie Tippett and Martin Archer using previously unissued solo concert performances by Keith Tippett, some from 1979 in the Netherlands, which also produced 1980's *The Lonely Raindancer*, others from the '90s in Bologna and Wales. Tippett's piano playing is remarkable as befits his virtuoso status, his epic, elegiac runs to full improv abandon with jarring chords and dissonant ringing, taking on added intensity since his death in 2020. Julie Tippett's newly recorded multi-tracked vocals, meanwhile, begin resolute, controlled, then suddenly high-pitched, unfettered and escalating to full-on banshee wail: "Our hearts are heavy," she intones on A Song. "In darkened places we falter. Sing high the song that purifies." The sound of healing.

Lois Wilson

Keith & Julie Tippett · Couple In Spirit
Sound On Stone

Mudhoney: now they wanna walk your dogs.

Emily Rieman

Mudhoney

★★★★

Plastic Eternity

SUB POP. CD/DL/LP/MC

Thirteen sustainable hits from Seattle's super-fuzz perennials.

LIKE GROUNDLING rock Cassandras, Mudhoney provide our age of absurdity with the anthems it deserves. Flush The Fascists rhymes "Jean Genet" with "Japanese bidet" over an uncanny evocation of Suicide infiltrating The Magic Band. Cry Me An Atmospheric River is climate crisis satire from the weather's POV: "You make me stronger 'cos you just can't stop pollutin'." No one does righteous indignation better than Mark Arm, yet *Plastic Eternity* – their eleventh full album in 35 years – has much nuance to gild its inimitable energy. There's an ode to Pere Ubu's guitarist (Tom Herman's Hermits), a thumping '60s psych jam with bonus bongos (Almost Everything), a spectral echo of Pink Floyd's Fearless written by drummer Dan Peters (One Or Two), and the droll Farfisa'd finale Little Dog, where Arm channels his inner Iggy to honour man's best friend: "In these times of trouble, I love a little dog". The world's gone wrong, but Mudhoney have never made more sense.

Keith Cameron

Feist

★★★★

Multitudes

FICTION. CD/DL/LP

First in six years from Leslie Feist might just be her best.

In contrast to its 2017 predecessor, *Pleasure*, wherein Feist employed stark, live-in-the-room recordings to emphasise painful feelings, *Multitudes* – its songs woodshedded or even written during in-the-round shows of the same name over the past two years – is much warmer and more inviting, while still foregrounding the intimacy that is her forte. The hushed folk of The Redwing is a thing of great melodic beauty, while the eerie, recorder-supported Martyr Moves finds her affectingly addressing emotions long-suppressed ("Three months… three years… 20 years… 80 years"). Beats are few and far between, making their appearances all the more dramatic: opener In Lightning utilises stop-start rhythms and Borrow Trouble's loping groove and drones pay homage to The Velvet Underground. If the latter's outro screams are a surprise, more often Feist sounds as if she's singing entirely for herself alone, and we're all just listening in.

Tom Doyle

Chip Taylor

★★★★

The Cradle Of All Living Things

TRAIN WRECK. CD/DL/LP

Songwriting legend ties up his philosophical loose ends.

You can't keep a good man down, and veteran singer, gambling addict, brother of Jon Voight and writer of Wild Thing Chip Taylor is a good man. Currently being treated for throat cancer, he's nevertheless recorded a double album; an intimate trawl through the wisdom he has won the hard way during his 82 years. Apologies, confessions, testaments to love and friendship, and no little amount of sound life advice tumble from these 24 songs, sung in a voice now starting to fade and croak. It resonates with age, however, his sagacity on the title track alone – finding beauty and nobility in everyday drudgery – worthy of any scripture. At nearly 90 minutes, *Cradle…* is hard to digest in one sitting, but whenever you need a lift in life, dive right on in.

Andy Fyfe

The New Pornographers

★★★

Continue As A Guest

MERGE. CD/DL/LP

The Ol' Pornographers learn some new tricks, but it costs 'em.

For a quarter-century, the magnetism of Carl Newman's confederation of Canadian ringers has seemed simple but been daunting: backfill power-pop anthems with lyrical and melodic sophistication, so that the smarts are deep but not distracting. At their best, the Pornographers have perfected a kind of ornate effervescence. Largely self-recorded at various studios in upstate New York, their ninth album embeds several expectedly expert hooks – Neko Case's taunts near the end of Angelcover, the ascendant melodies of Last And Beautiful – within multiple new-to-Newman contexts. The sax-laced prismatic beauty of Cat And Mouse With The Light is the sort of gem Broken Social Scene might have uncovered in its early days, while the Dan Bejar co-write Really Really Light churns with post-punk insistence. As such, there are ravishing moments and startling lines, but these 10 tracks collectively plod, the band's early sugar-rush sophistication never returning to grace this deliberate growth.

Grayson Haver Currin

Those Pretty Wrongs

★★★★

Holiday Camp

CURATION. CD/DL/LP

Irresistible follow-up to 2019's *Zed For Zulu* from Big Star man and accomplice.

This third album of positivist powerpop from Jody Stephens and Luther Russell was recorded at Memphis' Ardent Studios in 2020-21. Stephens drums and sings as he did in Big Star; Russell, formerly of The Freewheelers, takes care of the rest, besides Moog by Wilco's Pat Sansone, glockenspiel by Mitch Easter, and swooping string arrangements by The dB's' Chris Stamey. For the most part *Holiday Camp* follows the Big Star blueprint, its 10 songs enveloped in guitar jangle and celestial harmonies, dealing with wrangled emotions. "My heart is a paper cup/Fill it up/Don't tear it up," Stephens sings on the typically bruised but endearing Paper Cup. Brother, My Brother, about finding common ground, is more folky, with gentle finger-picked guitar circled by graceful flute and stately cello.

Lois Wilson

Silver Moth

★★★★

Black Bay

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

Mogwai's Stuart Braithwaite joins seven-way blind date in the Outer Hebrides.

After a Twitter chat between Abrasive Trees guitarist Matthew Rochford and multi-disciplinary singer Elisabeth Elektra, Silver Moth convened at remote Black Bay Studios on the Isle Of Lewis, with a line-up completed by Elektra's husband Braithwaite, vocalist Evi Vine, Prosthetic Head cellist Ben Roberts, guitarist/utility man Steven Hill and drummer Ash Babb. The collective mostly first met on the ferry from Ullapool, and in just a few days spirited up this fabulously elemental LP, inspired by the epic location. Two pungent long-form pieces will stir Mogwai fans: opener Henry builds to a tumultuous roar amid Vine's whisperings, while 15-minute Hello Doom is post-rock's Tubular Bells, patiently acquiring layers before achieving cement-mixer intensity, then blissful release. Elektra's fallen-friend elegy (The Eternal), Rochford's paternal poetry (Gaelic Psalms) and a Sandy Denny-esque hymn of female empowerment (Mother Tongue) further bolster an in-the-moment super-session of substance.

Andrew Perry

Spencer Cullum

★★★★

Spencer Cullum's Coin Collection 2

FULL TIME HOBBY. CD/DL/LP

East Londoner brings psych folk-jazz to Nashville.

A pedal steel-player (taught by the masterful BJ Cole) hired by everyone from Deer Tick to Dolly Parton, Spencer Cullum has spent his downtime well with his amorphous band, which here features contributions from Caitlin Rose and Dana Gavanski. On his second album, while it's impossible not to compare Cullum's voice to Robert Wyatt, there's enough passion and individuality to mark it out as way beyond mimicry. For a start, his songs are frequently brilliant: the pastoral imagery and gently delivered confessions of the gorgeous Green Trees; the bewitching *John Barleycorn…*-era Traffic mood of Betwixt And Between. Along the way, there are surprising stylistic twists and turns (Harmonia on The Three Magnets, Nilsson on Cold Damp Valley). Overall, it's the sound of a major talent rapidly developing on this often magical record.

Tom Doyle

Xylouris White

★★★

The Forest In Me

DRAG CITY. CD/DL/LP

Crete/Melbourne lute/drums improv duo branch out.

During a MOJO Record Club podcast last year, Warren Ellis let slip that a new Dirty Three record was likely to be released in 2023. In the 11 years since their last album, one of the multitudinous ways drummer Jim White has occupied himself is in a duo with the Cretan lute player, Giorgos Xylouris. It's a friendship that predates The Dirty Three and, over four previous albums, has drawn on Cretan folk to create something with comparably glowering romantic intensity. Fifth time out, though, Xylouris White have taken a thornier path, with the emphasis more on fractured, abstract improv rather than frenetic carousing. Interesting stuff, for sure: Xylouris's drift from fluency towards scratchiness occasionally suggests Derek Bailey with a lute; the stark vibes of, say, Missing Heart weirdly recall Slint's *Spiderland*. But while the title track has a sombre beauty, newcomers are best advised to start with 2014's often uproarious *Goats*.

John Mulvey

Sissoko Segal Parisien Peirani

★★★

Les Égarés

NØ FØRMAT. CD/DL/LP

Give yourself up to the pleasure of being lost.

The chic Parisian label's most reliable pairing – Vincent Segal (cello) and Ballaké Sissoko (kora) – are joined by Émile Parisien (saxophones) and Vincent Peirani (accordion) for an excursion into invention, forsaking preparation for nuggets of inspiration and a degree of rootless wander. There's an elegant Gypsy flavour to the results, both in sound and ambition, as the quartet roam through familiar territory on unexpected instruments. Opener Ta Nyé is West African, yet the strings take a backseat to accordion and sax solos; Izao has a Balkan feel, so naturally it opens with Malian flourishes before Peirani takes over. Covers include Ramón Cabrera Argotes' Cuban classic Esperanza (you'll know the Aznavour version) and Joe Zawinul's Orient Express, which gives you an idea of the scope here: jazz, Latin, folk, prog – all the things the album could be but somehow very definitely isn't.

David Hutcheon

Emma Tricca

★★★★

Aspirin Sun

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

After a slow burn, pensive singer-songwriter's fourth album erupts.

Although *Aspirin Sun*'s opening track, Devotion, is folk-slanted, with a cracked voice bringing to mind Karen Dalton, this is a prelude. By the time Italy-born, London-based Tricca's fourth album reaches its eighth and final track, such allusions have evaporated. This is an album as such; a suite of songs progressing towards a climax, its conclusion hovering between spaciousness and a full-on guitar-led freak-out – similar to the culmination of Judy Henske and Jerry Yester's 1969 *Farewell Aldebaran* album. And *Aspirin Sun* actually is a farewell, as it contemplates memories of her father, who died in 2018. Then, she had just issued her last album, *St Peter*, where her collaborators included Sonic Youth's Steve Shelley and The Dream Syndicate's guitarist Jason Victor. Both are here too. *Aspirin Sun*, then, is a coherent entity which should be heard as a whole.

Kieron Tyler

The Cash Box Kings

★★★★

Oscar's Motel

ALLIGATOR. CD/DL

New takes on old styles from Chicago blues band.

I once described The Cash Box Kings in these pages as playing "mostly unreconstructed downhome and early-Chicago blues". A decade on, singer/harmonica-player Joe Nosek and singer Oscar Wilson, now partnered by guitarist Billy Flynn, have mostly unleashed themselves from received repertoire, but they apply the same aesthetic to newly constructed songs; *Oscar's Motel* is built on a Howlin' Wolf riff, while Trying So Hard throbs with echoes of Muddy Waters and Little Walter. As on their last album for Alligator, *Hail To The Kings!* (2019), The Cash Box Kings mix the coinage of classic Chicago blues with newer currency, such as Wilson's mock-caustic duet with Deitra Farr, I Can't Stand You, or the inheritance song Nobody Called It The Blues. They bring to everything they write or perform expertise, enthusiasm and sheer style.

Tony Russell

Jethro Tull

★★★

RökFlöte

INSIDE OUT. CD/DL

Venerable proggers go Viking.

For those who haven't been paying attention, it's worth noting that, far from the spotlight, the Tull remain a chart band, their last album, *The Zealot Gene*, notching up success across continents. Ian Anderson is a worthy elder statesman of rock who's been there, done that and sold the T-shirts – so you perhaps can't complain when the 23rd studio album doesn't scale the progtastic heights of yore. All the familiar Tull-isms are present: trilling flute battling 1970s hard-rock guitar, arcane lyrics, folkie flourishes, on an album inspired by Norse myth (well it worked for Wagner). These 12 carefully crafted productions never quite bring to life the fearsome grassless void of Ginnungagap or the flaming majesty of the rainbow bridge. Odin probably wasn't much of a flautist. It's polished, professional, but one for the faithful.

John Bungey

Sissoko Segal Parisien Peirani go for a rootless wander.

FOLK

BY JIM WIRTH

Hack-Poets Guild

★★★★

Blackletter Garland

ONE LITTLE INDEPENDENT. CD/DL/LP

Fright phoebus: folkie power trio sex up ancient scandal sheets.

"I cut a man's throat and to a stake the judge chained me," sings Marry Waterson on the gory-locks shaking Ten Tongues, the opening track on her collaboration with Lisa Knapp and experimental composer Nathaniel Mann seemingly narrated by a murderer's rotting corpse. Reanimating songs and stories taken from broadsides (the penny dreadfuls of the 16th to 19th centuries), *Blackletter Garland* delights in gothic oddness and is pleasingly playful too; Knapp's Daring Highwayman transports the Fun Boy Three to Regency Britain, while her startling, Dagmar Krause-ish take on workers' lament Troubles Of This World is accompanied by knowing Venus In Furs string slashes. The Hack-Poets Guild's vision of modernity can skew a bit trip-hoppy, but there's no disputing their feel for the grand drama of their material. In all its sticky deadness, it lives.

ALSO RELEASED

Alasdair Roberts

★★★

Grief In The Kitchen And Mirth In The Hall

DRAG CITY. CD/DL/LP

Better known outside this column as the frontman of 1990s post-rock band Appendix Out, Ali Roberts returns to hedgerow basics for his fifth album of (sparsely accompanied, predominantly Scottish) traditional songs, focusing this time on class, gender and political conflict. Roberts' dying-Jacobite vocals remain thrillingly feeble, and Nic Jones-ly fingerpicking on Wonderful Grey Horse and Young Airly may draw in waverers.

Amy Thatcher/ Francesca Knowles

★★★★

Emergency Of The Female Kind

ATFK. CD/DL

Sometime foil to Northumbrian pipes maven Kathryn Tickell, Amy Thatcher tests the limits of her accordion on this folkie White Stripes collaboration with drummer Fran Knowles. It's the theme from Bergerac in dub on This Town Is Big Enough For Both Of Us, Soft Machine aggro psychedelia on Start Giving A Fuck, and reels wilder still on Wear It And Share It. Perverse, and, like 1970s outliers Mr Fox, often fantastic.

The Young'uns

★★★

Tiny Notes

HUDSON. DL

The no-longer-so-youthful Teesside harmonists' sixth album is a quest for redeeming light in cynical times. Phil Ochs held against his will aboard The Housemartins' Caravan Of Love, *Tiny Notes* finds hope in the stories of Fishmonger's Hall victim Jack Merritt, war zone surgeon David Nott, and the Three Dads walking to raise awareness of teenage suicide. Four-sugars sweet but on the side of the angels.

Cinder Well

★★★★

Cadence

FREE DIRT. CD/DL/LP

Late of County Clare, folk-adjacent songwriter Amelia Baker returned to her native California to make her follow-up to 2020's *No Summer*, but the windswept *Cadence* carries a trunk of old-world baggage – not least arrangements from Lankum's Cormac MacDiarmada. The title track and Two Heads, Grey Mare epitomise its moody essence: like Natalie Merchant doing early Sandy Denny. Listen, listen. *JW*

Ian Hunter: buoyant, celebratory and defiant.

Ross Halfin

Leader of the pack

Mott's irrepressible old dude sounds in fine fettle on a star-studded set of collaborations. By James McNair.

Ian Hunter

★★★★

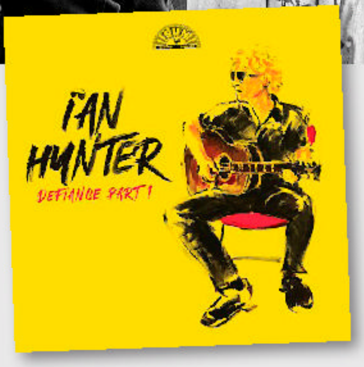
Defiance Part I

SUN. CD/DL/LP

"I AIN'T THRU/When I'm thru I'll notify you," sings Ian Hunter. As obits of our beloved rock luminaries accrue exponentially, this is cheering news. Eighty-four in June, Mott The Hoople's sunglasses-clad Peter Pan had to cancel his 2019 US solo tour due to severe tinnitus, but as *Defiance Part 1* makes abundantly clear, he won't be going gently – or depressedly – into that good night. The first of two new LPs giving the middle-finger to ageism and retirement (we're told *Defiance Part 2* may also arrive in 2023), this is a buoyant, celebratory affair. Or as Hunter puts it: "This is what I'm here for/Might as well enjoy it."

His enthusiasms are shared by a diverse supporting cast including Ringo Starr, Slash, Jeff Tweedy and Todd Rundgren. ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons and Hunter's since-departed pals Jeff Beck and Taylor Hawkins also appear on this lockdown labour of love/homage, the guvnor's unflashy-but-never-pedestrian songwriting and playful, glass-half-full lyrics still quite the draw. Bed Of Roses sets the mood, Ringo's drumming and former Heartbreaker Mike Campbell's slide-guitar driving a song nostalgic for rock's glory days – and seemingly some of the trimmings.

As he breezes through his ninth decade, Hunter's husky rasp – ever the acceptable-face of blokey bonhomie – is also in fine fettle. Agile and playfully pulling against the beat on the Rundgren-appointed pop-soul of Don't Tread On Me, robust and punchy on the Jeff Tweedy-aided ear-worm I Hate Hate, it also conjures the much-missed spirit of Mott on piano-led street symphony, Angel, wherein we're told "It's hard to kiss an angel/They got halos and the harp is always getting in the way."



Though the flurry of file-sharing and diversity of recording environments that projects like this one tend to involve may have robbed *Defiance Part 1* of a certain cohesion, even a weaker song like No Hard Feelings has the consolation of two show-stopping Jeff Beck solos. Elsewhere, too, Slash, Stone Temple Pilots' Dean DeLeo and Aerosmith's Brad Whitford bring their best game. Perhaps knowing that Hunter shared so many stages with Mick Ronson will do that to a guitarist.

"People say people my age shouldn't be making records," Hunter has said. With his mind still agile, his piano playing still on top form and his voice still strong, *Defiance Part 1* makes a nonsense of that. At 83, Hunter also sounds much more starry-eyed about rock'n'roll than he did in Diary Of A Rock'N'Roll Star, his lauded, famously candid account of Mott's 1972 US tour. Now ain't that refreshing?

Nothing is forever

Neo-soul star's 'quiet storm' comeback continues. By Andrew Male.

Eddie Chacon

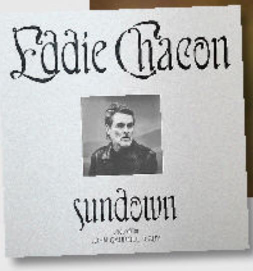
★★★★

Sundown

STONES THROW. CD/DL/LP

Eddie Chacon: embracing the beauty of the present.

Pat Martin



"I ALWAYS said if I got my head screwed on straight I could make one great record where I was honest with myself," Eddie Chacon told me in 2020. We were talking just prior to the release of his debut solo LP, *Pleasure, Joy And Happiness*, released some 28 years after his brief shot at fame with neo-soul duo Charles And Eddie, and following a good decade in which he'd turned his back on music completely. "I'd wanted to make this album my whole life," he said, "but it's taken my whole life to get there."

That album, an ethereal, stripped-down collection of haunting confessionals, recorded with Solange and Frank Ocean collaborator John Carroll Kirby, in which Chacon revisited past failures and regrets, his haunted falsetto floating on Kirby's vaporous synth lines, all underpinned by skeletal drum patterns, was Krapp's Last Tape via *Channel Orange*. It was, in Chacon's words, his "one great record". So where do you go after you've made the album you've been waiting your whole life to make? How do you follow up on a swan song?

First you go back to working with the man who made it all happen. Recorded in Ibiza with Kirby, utilising the island's sole Fender Rhodes, and then bolstered at 64 Sound Studios in north-east Los Angeles, with Logan Hone on flutes and saxophone, Elizabeth Lea on trombone, Will Logan on drums and David Leach on percussion, *Sundown* is both a bigger sounding LP than *Pleasure, Joy And Happiness* but also a deeper one. Ushered in by the deceptively simple opening track, Step By Step, a reeling 'quiet storm' appeal to "listen to your heart", reminiscent in its seductive slink of peak-era Sade or Robert Palmer, here is an enticing soul record about barely hanging on (Far Away), losing everything (Comes And Goes), the difficulty of long-term relationships (Holy Hell), blaming the world for your own failures (Same Old Song), and, on the title track, age and loss.

Tellingly, Chacon and Kirby say *Sundown* was inspired by repeat listens to Pharoah Sanders' cyclical 1975 live track, Greeting To Saud, vibing on its meditative power. That mood is certainly present but so is that seductive atmosphere of '80s/'90s soul; ruminations on mortality, failure and experience dressed up in a livery of pointillist seduction. The resultant combination is incredibly powerful, an emotionally rich and often lyrically dark album underpinned by both the "be here now" spirituality of Sanders and the "in the moment" seduction of Sade and Palmer. At its heart is a powerful message: if you've lost everything you can still embrace the beauty of the present instant or, as Chacon sings on the deceptively light Every Kinda People groove of the final track, The Morning Sun, "The morning sun/Touches everyone."

Josienne Clarke

★★★

Onliness

CORDUROY PUNK RECORDS. CD/DL/LP

Re-imagined favourites from Isle of Bute folkie.

In 2018, Josienne Clarke stepped away from a decade-long partnership with guitarist Ben Walker and from the restrictions of her record label – to launch her own. She handled every aspect of her next release; now, invigorated, she's returned to old tracks once neglected and given them the attention they deserve. It's quite an insight. With swipes of fuzzy electric guitar, The Tangled Tree moves from its victim mentality almost into upbeat, scatting jazz. Chicago, a tale of struggle ("It's not Chicago's fault/That no one came to see me play...") is now ironically jaunty, full of soulful brass and ultimately resilient. Anyone But Me is fabulously satisfying, a paranoid punk rock-out; Done becomes a moving, piano-led blues Randy Newman could have written. Some purer folk tracks feel too earnestly homogenous – still, on this radical flight path, anything could happen.

Glyn Brown

The Natural Lines

★★★★

The Natural Lines

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

All change for Philadelphia's Matt Pond, but the gorgeous song-writing remains the same.

Over 25 years and 14 albums, the outfit known as Matt Pond PA has featured 25 contributors. Its founder has made a break with tradition, recognising his cohorts (for starters, multi-instrumentalist Chris Hansen has been involved since 2007) with a new name to match a new outlook (more therapy, less drinking and "shouting at cars" he says) and a gentler, baroque slant to Pond's meticulous indie-pop, with cello and background harmonies playing key roles. The opening track, Monotony, shifts the sound even closer to the dextrous Shins and New Pornographer models; Alex Bell references the inventor of the telephone but given the dreamy *#1 Record* vibe, arguably Big Star's twin legends too. Pond acknowledges the influence of Blue Öyster Cult's (Don't Fear) The Reaper on My Answer, yet the motorik groove creates a dead ringer for Midlake's wood-smoked charm.

Martin Aston

Kendra Morris

★★★★

Babble

KARMA CHIEF. CD/LP

A 2016 neo-soul mini-album expanded and given a full release.

KENDRA MORRIS
babble

After the critical success of last year's *Nine Lives*, Karma Chief are making *Babble*, Kendra Morris's third album, widely available. Originally released in 2016, as a private press CD and 300-only LP with 50 copies hand-designed by Morris herself, *Babble* – as in the relentless pouring out of thoughts and the cascade of water over rocks in a brook – broadly explores the arc of a relationship. As with all her work, Morris makes bold, bald personal statements against the purest modern-retro R&B. From the original album, the Amy Winehouse-like Le Snitch addresses bullying; Twist & Burn the vibrancy of new love. Of the three new tracks, the pulsing ambience of Ride On is a sweet-yet-gritty tribute to her late brother. The crescendo on Cry Sometimes underlines why Kendra Morris is one of the great soul voices of the early 21st century.

Daryl Easlea

Nickel Creek

★★

Celebrants

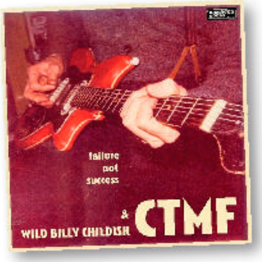
THIRTY TIGERS. CD/DL/LP

Progressive bluegrass pioneers reunited. Again.

Before announcing a hiatus in 2005 that lasted for nine years, Nickel Creek were very much the vanguard of 'progressive' bluegrass, expanding the genre's horizons with sprinkles of classical and jazz flavours. Which made the more straightforward, traditional bluegrass of their 25th anniversary comeback album, 2014's *A Dotted Line*, all the more surprising. Another nine years on, another reunion, and *Celebrants* returns to the trio's progressive past, all but throwing out the bluegrass completely. Unfortunately, they've also thrown out all the tunes, too, making *Celebrants* a strangely bloodless album heavy on technical perfection rather than the visceral emotion at the core of the best roots music. Lead track Strangers is a case in point. Chris Thile's lyrics about the awkwardness of meeting old friends after a long break are made shallow and dry by dull harmonies and musicianship searching for soloing applause. A frustrating return.

Andy Fyfe

NICKEL CREEK
CELEBRANTS



Wild Billy Childish & CTMF

★★★★

Failure Not Success

DAMAGED GOODS. CD/DL/LP

Stirring new dispatches from the Medway Delta.

"Move over Jimi/Let Rover take over," sings Billy Childish on this LP's ferocious version of Hendrix's Fire. He also delivers an excellent, full-blooded take on The Voidoids' Love Comes In Spurts, hoisting a flag for his perennial touchstones, '60s beat music and first-generation '70s punk. Jimi crops up again in the lyrics to Childish's own nicely judged polemic, Bob Dylan's Got A Lot To Answer For, which helpfully offers some retrospective advice to various suspects including the Stones, Allen Ginsberg, Van Morrison and the Nobel Prize Committee. One of the great pleasures of CTMF records is the visceral quality of the sound recording itself, beautifully achieved with a minimum of adornments, but the key to it all is Childish's ability to keep writing new songs as powerful and affecting as Becoming Unbecoming Me. Like the man said, there's no success like failure.

Max Décharné

Dave Okumu & The Seven Generations

★★★★

I Came From Love

TRANSGRESSIVE. CD/DL/LP

Multi-genre trailblazer's dissertation on black existence, featuring Grace Jones.

The phrase that recurs throughout Dave Okumu's second solo album defines its mission: "The struggle to articulate what we're going through." It explores black history both on the macro and personal scale, channelling the voices of refugees (Scenes) and survivors of the 1981 New Cross fire (Blood Ah Go Run) and the disenfranchised (Streets). It's unabashedly weighty stuff, fiery and possessed of a powerful melancholy. But as one might expect from Okumu – one of the UK's most plugged-in musicians, former leader of questing experimental group The Invisible and a sideman who has worked with Amy Winehouse, Joan As Policewoman and King Sunny Adé – the soundtrack is gripping and inspired. From the simmering funk blues of Prison to the smudgy D'Angelo soul of Get Out, *I Came From Love* is an often challenging, always thrilling triumph that rewards deep listening and re-listening.

Stevie Chick

Allan Clarke

★★★

I'll Never Forget

BMG. CD/DL/LP

Former Hollies singer back on the solo trail.

Allan Clarke left The Hollies at the turn of the century to care for both his ill wife Jennifer and his ravaged voice, which could no longer hit the higher notes. That seemed to be that, but in 2019 he reappeared with *Resurgence* and now comes *I'll Never Forget*. Schoolfriends Clarke and Graham Nash began The Hollies in 1962, and here Nash contributes backing vocals and, nestling alongside 10 Clarke originals, the Holly homage, Buddy's Back. Naturally, perhaps, it's nostalgia-tinged, hence the string-laden title track, a rare moment when the Hollies ghost re-surfaces. Meanwhile, the countrified Let's Take This Back To Bed is a rare paean to long-term marriage and while Clarke's vocals may no longer be Hollies-friendly, his newly deep, resonant tones enhance a collection which, as might be expected from an 80-year-old, doesn't always sizzle, but does exude warmth and no little quality.

John Aizlewood

The Arcades Project
JOHN FOXX

John Foxx

★★★★

The Arcades Project

METAMATIC. CD/DL

Delicate evocation of the ambience of a city's galleried passages.

The Arcades Project has had a long gestation. At art school in the '60s, the German thinker Walter Benjamin's book of the same name tantalised John Foxx. He knew the writings drew on Baudelaire's idea of the flâneur, drifting through the city. Written between 1927 and 1940 – the year Benjamin took his own life – it concerned the covered passages of Paris titled Das Passagen-Werk. Finally published in 1982 and translated into English in 1999 as The Arcades Project. Now, the album: entirely solo and instrumental. Minimal, shimmering piano figures echoing Foxx's work with Harold Budd weave through a sonic wash nodding to his ambient *Cathedral Oceans* albums. The atmosphere is of rumination and tranquillity, rather than that of the hubbub of shoppers and strollers. This musical flâneur navigates the passages like vapour.

Kieron Tyler

Dom Flemons

★★★★

Traveling Wildfire

SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS. CD/DL/LP

"The American songster" confronts life's challenges.

As songwriter, instrumentalist and historian, Dom Flemons is one of the most accomplished contemporary American folk artists. From his Carolina Chocolate Drops days to his solo work, few have pumped as much lifeblood into tradition as he has. While he's made a career of resurrecting older songs, here he highlights his own material written during the pandemic, focusing on loss and rebirth, and influenced by the roots music that informs his work. (He also covers Dylan, Eric Andersen and Reverend Gary Davis.) In the process, Flemons reminds us that struggle and tragedy – and survival – are perennial subjects of song. He plays 15 instruments with a small combo, including fiddler Sam Bush and Pogues accordionist/pianist James Fearnley. Particularly compelling are the stark country love odes wrapped in haunting pedal steel.

Michael Simmons

Gabriel da Rosa

Gabriel Da Rosa

★★★★

É O Que A Casa Oferece

STONES THROW. DL/LP

Timeless recreation of peak-era Brazilian samba and bossa nova.

Growing up in rural southern Brazil, Gabriel Da Rosa became fascinated by classic MPB. His father, a radio DJ, brought home records by Jobim, Veloso et al, and his poet mother taught him about music and art. A spell in a punk band led to travels in the US where he met Stones Throw's Peanut Butter Wolf, and they bonded over bossa nova. Da Rosa started writing his own bossas with collaborator Pedro Dom and the resulting, brief LP is a sheer delight, conjuring classic samba-pop from a modern perspective with the passion of an artist in exile recalling the pleasures and rhythms of home. Highlights include the two-part Jasmim's super-smooth reverie, and the sole song sung in English, the lovely So You Can See Me, where an orchestra appears to guide us deep into a watery cave.

Jim Irvin

Jana Horn

★★★★

The Window Is The Dream

NO QUARTER. CD/DL/LP

If you're feeling fenestra: clear-sighted second album from Texan singer-songwriter.

In the frame: Jana Horn enjoys the view.

Ebru Yildiz

"I live in between 'is' and 'isn't'," sings Jana Horn on *The Window Is The Dream*, the follow-up to her 2022 debut *Optimism*. While there is something necessarily elusive in her songs about memory, the subconscious and delicate interpersonal connections, it would be a mistake to see Horn as in any way ethereal. She compresses a great deal of hard meaning into a small space, guitars and synths adding a touch of prog steel, Love-like flourishes bringing light paranoia, while biblical miniature Song For Eve is tethered by a drum machine. Lines can be traced through to Tanya Donelly's magic realism, Bill Callahan's downbeat philosophising or Nina Nastasia's surgical precision; the heartbroken The Way It Is could be Lana Del Rey after a desert creative writing retreat. *The Window Is The Dream* initially seems opaque, but keep looking through and all becomes beautifully clear.

Victoria Segal

Altın Gün

★★★★

Aşk

GLITTERBEAT. **CD/DL/LP**

The feted Turkish sextet's return to Anatolian psychedelia.

During 2020-2021, Amsterdam-based Altın Gün decamped to a bunker beneath the Vondelpark to issue two albums heavily weighted towards electro-pop, a by-product of their inability to interact with live audiences. *Aşk*, whose title alludes to love's deeper feelings, faces in the opposite direction: its 10 traditional Turkish folk songs were recorded on vintage gear in a semi-live setting, heralding a return to the overriding psychedelic folk rock sound of the 1970s, but filtered in places through synth-pop, disco, and space rock. Thus, Rakiya Su Katamam amps up the psych element, Su Siziyor melds saz and trippy slide guitar atop a bouncing reggae groove, and Doktor Civanim craves the disco glitterball. Lead singer Merve Daşdemir is on commanding form throughout and Erdinç Ecevit sounds equally at home on Canim Oy, delivering its words between shimmering fuzzbox guitar passages.

David Katz

Dwight Trible

★★★★

Ancient Future

GEARBOX. **CD/DL/LP**

Wailing surrealism and funky looseness abound on Los Angeles spiritual jazz shaman's latest.

A Los Angeles institution known for his work with Pharoah Sanders, Horace Tapscott and Kamasi Washington, Trible is enjoying a real purple patch. *Ancient Future* feels much looser than recent excursions with Cosmic Vibrations and Kahil El'Zabar's Ethnic Heritage Ensemble, predicated on Trible's chemistry with a quartet propelled by André Gouché's funky electric bass. Trible lets the strangeness in slowly, taking listeners on a lip-smacking travelogue of LA soul food spots (My Stomping Ground) before unveiling Derf Recklaw and Black Dance, 10-minute centrepieces of wailing jazzy impressionism, the latter a from-the-gut duet with Georgia Anne Muldrow. It's reined back in on African Drum, alongside Washington's wonderfully laid-back guest turn, but Trible's twangy, rich baritone – part Leon Thomas, part Barry White – sounds more authoritative here than ever.

Andy Cowan

Bhajan Bhoy

★★★

To Love Is To Love Vols I & 2

CARDINAL FUZZ/FEEDING TUBE. **DL/LP**

Third and fourth instalments of avant-raga from Anglo-Dutch head.

Ajay Saggar has lived many lives: bassist with '80s indie group Dandelion Adventure, sound engineer for My Bloody Valentine and Dinosaur Jr, and anchor of projects including cult '90s mischief-makers Donkey, noise-pop duo Deutsche Ashram and ambient-dub excursionists Universally Challenged. On these sibling LPs, those lives collapse in on each other, with often thrilling, occasionally cacophonic results. Backed by his amorphous Raga Arkestra, Saggar constructs a unique soundworld broad enough to encompass wild psych-noise guitar, dream-pop lullabies, and futuristic drones. The first volume is restless, eclectic, from the questing acid-rock of The Guiding Light to Lovely Day For Cricket's ambitious patchwork of avant guitar techniques and ancient radio transmissions. The second volume is a more meditative proposition: four epic soundscapes doused in mysticism, their ambient hums crackling with invention and, on the closing Eliane's Conch, menace.

Stevie Chick

Altın Gün: psych-ing themselves up on LP number 5.

Camille Blake

Dorothy Moskowitz & The United States Of Alchemy

★★★★

Under An Endless Sky

TOMPKINS SQUARE. **CD/DL/LP**

Singer from legendary electronic-rock band returns to deep space.

On the solitary 1968 LP by the Los Angeles acid-and-oscillators combo The United States Of America, Dorothy Moskowitz was the magnetic, vocal soul in the science, a spectral-fire counterpart to the group's ring-modulator riffing and circuit-board impressionism. Aside from a spell singing with Country Joe McDonald, *Under An Endless Sky* is Moskowitz's first album since that prophetic landmark, born after composer Francesco Paolo Paladino (half of The United States Of Alchemy with lyricist Luca Chino Ferrari) asked her to sing on his work. It's a seduction in halves. Moskowitz breaks the celestial-ocean surface in the 22-minute title piece with warm, melodic logic, in corkscrew-lullaby arcs. Six shorter pieces evoke her haunted carolling and moonwalk balladry in the original USA – and make you hope she has phone messages waiting from Mercury Rev and The Flaming Lips.

David Fricke

Brix Smith

★★★

Valley Of The Dolls

GRIT OVER GLAMOUR. **CD/DL/LP**

Post-punk polymath rises up with solo debut.

After a stint with fellow Fall members in The Extricated, Brix Smith has struck out alone for *Valley Of The Dolls*, the kind of record it's handy to have around the house during power cuts. Produced by Youth, these songs spark and crackle like little pop-punk generators, the lyrics a short sharp slosh of battery acid. There's a fuzzy '90s energy to Fast Net and Aphrodite that's reminiscent of L7, Hole, Veruca Salt and – thanks to Smith's smiling-assassin voice – The Breeders. Yet despite their exuberance (and guest appearances from Susanna Hoffs and Siobhan Fahey), these songs are shot through with rage and darkness. Living Through My Despair revisits Manchester haunts ("Stockhausen and the football scores"), while Black Butterfly is edged with psychedelic unease, Smith singing "take me out of this reality." With *Valley Of The Dolls*, she's once again carved out a space of her own.

Victoria Segal

UNDERGROUND

BY JOHN MULVEY

Samuel Rohrer

★★★★

Codes Of Nature

ARJUNA. **DL/LP**

The improv/techno/post-rock boom continues apace!

If you fell for the elaborately interlocking grooves of Oren Ambarchi's *Shebang* last year, this latest album by Swiss-born, Berlin-based drummer Samuel Rohrer operates in a similar space. Rohrer's actually worked in the past with Ambarchi, Norwegian trumpeter Nils Petter Molvær and techno don Ricardo Villalobos – useful contextualising reference points that are complicated somewhat by another previous collaborator, the photographer Nan Goldin. The six tracks on *Codes Of Nature* have the propulsive forward motion of electronic dance music, and its crispness, but they also feel more organic; as if a bunch of improvising jazz musicians have ruthlessly pared down their practices into a streamlined groupthink (note: Rohrer played everything himself). Try the algorhythmically funky beat science of Scapegoat Principle for starters, which sounds very roughly like Jaki Liebezeit constructing a track for the Basic Channel techno imprint.

ALSO RELEASED

Magic Tuber Stringband

★★★★

Tarantism

FEEDING TUBE. **DL/LP**

Tarantism is the urge to dance, codified as a psychological illness – not something often provoked by this column. Nevertheless, this Durham, North Carolina stringband intersperse shruti box drones with fervid Appalachian banjo and fiddle freakouts. Like fellow travellers Pelt, a band alive to the experimental possibilities of American roots music, both in its traditional forms and in where it can be stretched.

Ozmotic | Fennesz

★★★★

Senzatempo

TOUCH. **DL/LP**

An obsessive collaborator (you might know him from his work with Ryuichi Sakamoto and David Sylvian), it sometimes feels like the Austrian guitarist Christian Fennesz might be better focusing on his superb solo work. That said, his third set with Italian duo Ozmotic is a beauty; great slow-motion waves of processed symphonic noise that land somewhere between Henryk Górecki and My Bloody Valentine.

Jeremiah Chiu & Marta Sofia Honer

★★★★

Leaving Grass Mountain

LONGFORM EDITIONS. **DL**

The Australian label Longform Editions favours phrases like "absorptive listening experiences" over "ambient". But this highlight of their latest tranche of releases (also recommended: Matt Valentine; Amby Downs & Steve Gunn) certainly edges into the latter zone: a bucolic synth/viola jam with aspects of Harmonia, and a beatific sequel to the LA duo's outstanding 2022 LP, *Recordings From The Åland Islands*.

Elijah McLaughlin Ensemble

★★★

III

ASTRAL SPIRITS. **DL/LP**

Another frenzy of strings, from the Chicago trio of McLaughlin on 12-string acoustic, Jason Toth on double bass and, especially, Joel Styzens on hammered dulcimer. Field recordings and synths add more depth and shade than was evident on their first two albums, but the prevailing mood is rapturous, a baroque accumulation of strums and harp-like resonances that conjure the spirits of both Robbie Basho and Laraaji. *JM*

LAUREL CANYON

Laurel Canyon

★★★★

Laurel Canyon

AGITATED. CD/LP

Grungy thrills and sick pop hooks abound on Philly trio's debut.

The energy of the early-'90s Pacific Northwest scene is alive and thriving in 21st-century Philadelphia, going by this pedal-stomping, amps-to-11 debut. Laurel Canyon have the loser-vibe of prime Sub Pop nailed on the likes of Steve Albini-produced opener Drop Out and the marvellously propulsive Madame Hit The Wire, which imagines Mudhoney jamming on Sister Ray. There's more than just flagrant Big Muff abuse at play here, however. Alongside their scruffy riffage, Laurel Canyon boast a neat line in hooky garage rock nuggets to rival Ty Segall's early output, not to mention – on the addictive Take Your Cut and Victim – a Cobain-esque feel for unlikely-but-captivating chord progressions that often turn the sludge into glorious melody. The moody power of this debut is something to savour; the primal sophistication of Laurel Canyon's songwriting suggests a Nirvana-esque crossover would be well deserved.

Stevie Chick

Easy Star All-Stars

★★★

Ziggy Stardub

EASY STAR. CD/DL/LP

Bowie's 1972 glam master-piece, in a reggae style.

Kicking off 20 years ago with *Dub Side Of The Moon*, Michael Goldwasser's NYC-hatched series of reggaefied classic-album makeovers may never be the hipster's choice. They are, however, entertaining, and with success has come higher levels of finesse, ambition, and collaborative pulling power. More than ever, *Ziggy Stardub* presents a mixed bag of styles beneath Jah's own musical umbrella: Maxi Priest's 'flying cymbal' tilt at Starman; Star and particularly Suffragette City tackled at a breathless ska gallop; Moonage Daydream's cosmic lovers rock, beautifully voiced by Naomi Cowan; and most radically of all, Hang On To Yourself given a booty-shaking early dancehall bass-synth riff *à la* Johnny Osbourne's Buddy Bye. Mortimer's Soul Love, meanwhile, is faithful enough to be almost devoid of reggae, but at the last, R&B diva Macy Gray steals the show with a charismatic skank through Rock'n'Roll Suicide – possibly Goldwasser's finest moment so far.

Andrew Perry

Dur-Dur Band Int.

★★★★

The Berlin Session

OUTTHERE. CD/DL/LP

First new material from Somali funk outfit in three decades.

When civil war devastated Somalia at the start of the 1980s, the artists in a country renowned for its poetry were given a stark choice: flight or fight. Unsurprisingly, many chose to emigrate, bringing to a close the golden age of the Mogadishu club scene and leaving former colleagues spread across the globe, unable to work together. Until, that is, 2019, when a gig was organised in Berlin to celebrate what had been lost; supplementing the show, studio dates were booked to let the musicians reacquaint themselves with the material. The Dhaanto rhythm (one which pre-dates reggae but is very similar) is to the fore, and there's a curious reworking of Fela Kuti's Lady (Jija Love). From the moment vocalist Faadumiina Hilowle orders "Inta ka hurgot" ("Let's shake the dust off, boys") on the ultra-funky Wan Ka Helaa, you know it's going to be fun.

David Hutcheon

Hanakiv

★★★★

Goodbyes

GONDWANA. CD/DL/LP

Estonian sound artist's debut straddles jazz, neo-classical and ambient.

Hanakiv had just moved to London when the pandemic hit. With no network or family nearby, the Estonian Academy of Music graduate lost herself in music, penning much of this debut. Realised alongside sound engineer Fi Roberts, its simultaneously soothing and edgy arrangements are more involved than they first appear, subtle electronic undertones simmering below the surface. Layers of typically breathy sax, courtesy of jazz don Alabaster DePlume, add a dreamy texture to the scaling melodics of And It Felt So Nice and slippery quick-fire motifs of No Words Left, while the gathering storm of Rebekah Reid's violins and Hanakiv's Glass-like repetitions distinguish two movements of grandmother homage Home. She's in the same broad church as Hauschka or Poppy Ackroyd, but Hanakiv sings from a different hymn sheet.

Andy Cowan

The Selecter

★★★★

Human Algebra

DMF MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Pauline Black targets militarism, knife crime, alcohol, social media and more.

With both Terry Hall and Ranking Roger recently passed on, Black remains strong as one of 2-Tone's surviving voices on this sixteenth recorded outing. Though she and trusty co-vocalist Arthur 'Gaps' Hendrickson are newly rejoined by turn-of-the-'80s drummer Charley 'Aitch' Bembridge, The Selecter's sonic attack has certainly mellowed in the four decades since the battering ska-punk performances of Three Minute Hero and Too Much Pressure captured in the newly restored Dance Crazy movie; here they move at a mid-'70s roots lilt. The lyrical messaging's as sharp as ever, however: mendacious politicians (Big Little Lies; Scandalous) and crap romantic partners (Boxing Clever; Not In Love With Love) cop lethal verbiage from Black's pen, while Star Fell Out Of The Blue vehemently espouses reversing Brexit. Such is the pervasive biliousness that the openness of Black's elegy for The Beat's late MC Roger ("we made the same mistakes," etc) strikes home as all the more heartfelt.

Andrew Perry

Luke Vibert

★★★★

Machine Funk

DE:TUNED. DL/LP

Paean to the humble 303, the little box that made music history.

The Roland TB-303 bass synth was a commercial failure on its launch more than 40 years ago, shunned by many as a pale imitation of the real thing. Yet within a few years it had been adopted by musicians in Chicago who, taking advantage of plummeting prices and ease of use, deployed it to kickstart the acid house phenomenon. Luke Vibert, a contemporary of fellow Cornishman Aphex Twin, has spent the past three decades ably utilising the raw, emotive power generated by this little silvery box. *Machine Funk* tours the faultlines created by the doughty groove machine, from house to techno, electro to robo-funk. Whether it's Major Miner – a breakdancer-style stomp with hints of '80s BBC TV kids show theme – or the retro title track that nods to Phuture and Kraftwerk, Vibert proves that the 303 still has an uncanny ability to make a body move.

Stephen Worthy

Blondshell

★★★★

Blondshell

PARTISAN. CD/DL/LP

Manhattan-raised, Los Angeles-forged songwriter makes her debut.

STUDYING ON the University Of Southern California's Pop Program, Sabrina Teitelbaum, AKA Blondshell, was the proverbial square peg in a round hole. Now 25 and treading Nirvana/Hole-influenced terrain better suited to the bleed and bluster of these uncensored songs of self-empowerment, she has found her perfect skin. An agile-voiced drawler big on shoe-gazey guitars, one-word song titles, and confessions of dysfunction, Teitelbaum sings of both she and her therapist knowing her boyfriend's "a dick" (Sepsis), a friend damaged by watching too much HBO too young (Joiner), and of cleaning up her own act (Sober Together). Crucially, not everything she learned at USC has been ditched, hence her frankly-articulated fears and travails – "I was running away from loneliness and self-esteem stuff," she has said – are sugared with heaps of indelible melody.

James McNair

Blondshell, AKA Sabrina Teitelbaum: frankly-articulated fears and heaps of melody.

Daniel Topete

Blondshell

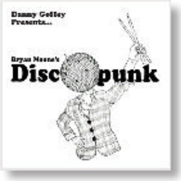
Andrew Gabbard

★★★

Cedar City Sweetheart

COLEMAN RECORDS. **CD/DL/LP**

The touring guitarist for The Black Keys cloaks himself in psychedelic cowboy classicism. Songs of smoky mountains, shining pedal steel, and "a handmade quilt for a shield" (Take Me Away From You) wear the most threadbare of country tropes with aplomb. *JB*



Danny Goffey

★★★

Bryan Moone's DiscoPunk

DISTILLER MUSIC. **CD/DL**

A QOTSA-like chug powers saucer-eyed Everybody's On Drugs, driving the point home that Supergrass's drummer was always the fun one. Other stimulants include Ian Dury (All Dressed Up), The Only Ones (Flea Market Woman), punk-funk and glam rock for thug rumbles. *CP*

Mammal Hands

★★★★

Gift From The Trees

GONDWANA. **DL/LP**

There's a real depth charge to the Norwich trio's fifth LP. A partly improvised reach for their live energy, the atmospheric undertow of The Spinner's minimalist Nyman-like piano repetitions or Dimu's drones and Reich-ish hand drums come laden with darting, diverting sax melodies. Their best yet. *AC*

MultiTraction Orchestra

★★★★

Reactor One

SUPERPANG. **DL**

With members of GoGo Penguin, Supersilent, Kraków and Hen Ogledd, this debut finds Alex Roth's fluid ensemble roaming disparate worlds: laptop pulses, classical meditation, curvy ambience topped by Arve Henriksen's trumpets. An experimental post-jazz trove. *AC*

The Nude Party

★★★★

Rides On

NEW WEST. **CD/DL/LP**

Strong Stones in the '70s vibes set the tone for the New York-based group's third LP, replacing in-the-garage rawness with dirt, sweat and blood country rock on Hard Times (All Around). Other highlights: Spectorish Cherry Red Boots, tremulous Sold Out Of Love. *JB*

Spectacular Diagnostics

★★★★

Raw Lessons

RUCKSACK. **DL/LP**

Chicago hip-hop producer builds on recent work with Penpals and Kid Acne. His clockmaker's skill at layering samples and dusty moon-bap meets its match on tracks with new rocks (PremRock & Fatboi Sharif) and '90s originals (Juice Aleem, Mike Ladd). *AC*

Stella Kola

★★★

Stella Kola

FOUNTAIN FLIGHT. **DL/LP**

Surprisingly genteel acid-folk from some wilder denizens of the New England underground, corralled by Sunburned Hand Of The Man's Rob Thomas. Nice baroque arrangements, though Beverly Ketch's vocals may be a little indie-twee for some tastes. *JM*

Thandii

★★★

A Beat To Make It Better

THANDII. **DL**

Lockdown enabled session musicians Jess Barry (Ghostpoet) and Graham Godfrey (Michael Kiwanuka) to develop this collage of lounge, trip-hop and Filipino kulintang. While the instrumental glee often belies darker themes, it's held intact by sharp pop sensibilities and Barry's cool, jazzy voice. *AC*

The Tubs

★★★★

Dead Meat

TROUBLE IN MIND. **CD/DL/LP**

A bracing idea, brilliantly executed by these Welshmen in London: Richard Thompson's withering precision meets The Feelies' overdriven jangle. Bob Mould's been hereabouts before, of course, but The Tubs' tightly-wound songs are good enough to transcend the concept. *JM*

Nick Waterhouse

★★★★

The Fooler

INNOVATIVE LEISURE/PRES. **CD/DL/LP**

Though recorded in Georgia, the latest from vintage soul hub Waterhouse is rooted in San Francisco. Set against a seductive red velvet backdrop of sound ('60s girl groups, soul, R&B, jazz) atmospheric songs romanticise "Dream figures and city past" (Was It You) like a Californian *Coles Corner. JB*

Yamäya

★★★★

Senegal

FUNKIWALA. **DL**

This tight, funky London/Brighton near-dozen interweave originality into a solid Afrobeat base. The friction is palpable on standouts Senegal and African Politician – symphonic brass riffs, wild card soloing and shifting polyrhythms nailed by Khadim Sarr's charismatic, Wolof-sung pronouncements. *AC*

Hans Zimmer

★★★★

Live

SONY CLASSICAL. **CD/DL/LP**

From the soundtrack composer's 2022 tour, 31 tracks arranged into suites, bookended by two sections from his reputation-making score for Christopher Nolan's Inception. A supporting cast (including Lisa Gerrard on vocals) help realise his versatility (from The Dark Knight to Dune) and epic, rock instincts. *JB*

EXTENDED PLAY

Gina Birch: happy to be in the club.

Eva Vermandel

The MOJO Record Club

WHO DEMANDED uncooked haggis on their rider? Who had a musical epiphany with chronic food poisoning? Who can pronounce the word "Bajascillators"? The MOJO Record Club has tackled some esoteric subjects in the nine months since it launched, but fundamentally it's a place where our favourite musicians can talk about the records that changed their world.

Hosted by Andrew Male, recent guests have included Jody Stephens, Yo La Tengo, Peter Buck, Gina Birch, Mick Head and Robert Forster, discussing cratedigger gems like Willis Alan Ramsey's self-titled 1972 debut and *I Came To Visit; But Decided To Stay* by Armand Schaubroeck, as well as more familiar classics by Roberta Flack, Laura Nyro and Bob Marley. The show also keeps you up to date with the latest releases picked by Andrew and the MOJO team. If you're a MOJO VIP member, you'll already be receiving the MOJO Record Club as part of your package. Otherwise, sign up here: https://mojo.supportingcast.fm

Unlucky 13

This 13-LP box of their complete studio recordings offers a full-length portrait of Sidcup's underappreciated thrash R&B outfit. By **Jim Wirth**.

The Pretty Things

★★★★

The Complete Studio Albums: 1965-2020

MADFISH. LP

"WORK YOUR asses off for ever, midnight highways really bring you down," sang Phil May on Rip Off Train, summing up The Pretty Things' hard-scrabble existence on 1972's *Freeway Madness*. After nearly a decade of chasing the dream, the *enfants terribles* of British R&B were tiring of motel sheets, transport café breakfasts and dubious management calls, but had come too far to quit. "You're there and you're working so don't complain," May shrugs. "So many miss the train."

As this sweep of their 13 albums shows, The Pretty Things clung on in pop's standard class for nearly 60 years, three modest '60s hits, some library music work and a great live reputation enabling them to remain more or less active until May's death in 2020, from complications following hip surgery. They peaked with martial 1968 concept album *S.F. Sorrow* and its sun-streaked follow-up *Parachute* (1970), but if *The Complete Studio Albums 1965-2020* stands testament to some questionable artistic decisions, it also shows what determined men with a basic knowledge of the Bo Diddley songbook could achieve.

the pretty things
The Complete Studio Albums 1965-2020

"This box shows what determined men with a basic knowledge of the Bo Diddley songbook could achieve."

BACK STORY: TOMBSTONE BLUES

- The Pretty Things received a modest £2,500 signing-on fee from Parlophone and the promise of extended studio time at Abbey Road as they set about making *S.F. Sorrow*. Unfortunately, they were £3,000 in debt at the time, and were forced to make the album in fits and starts since they could not afford to spend long periods off the road. To make matters worse, the label then refused to pay for a gatefold sleeve for the record unless The Pretty Things paid for it out of their royalties. They reluctantly conceded. Released in late 1968, it was over 12 months late for the Summer of Love, and did not come out until 1970 in the States, with Motown's Rare Earth rock imprint making the eccentric decision to package *S.F. Sorrow* in a sombre 'tombstone' sleeve. The Pretty Things' greatest work was subsequently bulldozed by Rolling Stone's Lester Bangs as a "grossly puerile cross between the Bee Gees, *Tommy*, and the Moody Blues".

S.F. SORROW
The Pretty Things

A Dartford Grammar schoolmate of Mick Jagger, Dick Taylor quit the larval Rolling Stones when he was relegated from guitar to bass. At Sidcup Art College, he teamed up with pioneering long-hair May to form the sardonically named The Pretty Things. Their nasty, brutish 1964 debut single Rosalyn fell just short of the Top 40, but Don't Bring Me Down (Number 10), Honey I Need (Number 13) and Cry To Me (Number 28) scored higher as the band left chaos in their wake. Their road manager was apparently fined for pulling a shotgun to fend off toughs in Trowbridge, May was hauled off-stage by eager girls in High Wycombe, while a riotous televised appearance at a 1965 festival in the Netherlands was taken off air due to viewer complaints.

Like fellow travellers Them and The Animals, The Pretty Things burned bright on 7-inch (hear 1966's Midnight To Six Man and tremble), but found albums harder to fill. May's lusty Road Runner was a calling card, but the remainder of their self-titled 1965 debut lacks sizzle. They added primitive folk rock to the mix for quickie follow-up *Get The Picture?* (Jimmy Page gets a co-write on opener You Don't Believe Me), but were still a little off the pace. Tellingly, while peers were invading America, The Pretty Things were sent off to break Australia and New Zealand. It didn't end well.

Reading the room better, the leather-lunged May softened his delivery for 1967's largely self-penned *Emotions*. The orchestration imposed on their final album for Fontana horrified the band, but the West Coast guitar on One Long Glance, the wigged-out Growing In My Mind and the knowing Tripping nodded hopefully towards the boot-boy psychedelia of the Small Faces.

A switch to Parlophone brought more studio time and the services of *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* producer Norman Smith, and The Pretty Things stretched to their furthest extent for *S.F. Sorrow*. Slathered in backward guitar, sitar and mellotron, May's gloomy extended piece about a disillusioned Great War soldier has a heft that fey Brit-psych contemporaries could not match. May's molten-Wilfred Owen lyrics on Private Sorrow, the Greek chorus wails and Taylor's sheet metal guitars on Old Man Going and Balloon Burning signposted a bad trip tour de force. However, it was impossible to reproduce on-stage and did not come out until December 1968, by which time Sebastian Sorrow's World War 1 helmet seemed a very old hat indeed.

Taylor left in 1969, but The Pretty Things pressed on with 1970's *Parachute*, a jumble of excitable fragments strung together like a hairier *Abbey Road*. With swooping harmonies – The Good Mr Square; She Was Tall, She Was High; Grass – plus sub-Hendrix racket for the burgeoning metal contingent, it offered an array of possibilities. Had he built on the avant-Sweet foundations laid on Miss Fay Regrets, the bisexual May might have been a glam pacesetter (honouring a musical debt, David Bowie covered two Pretty Things hits on 1973's *Pin-Ups*).

As it was, the band spent the '70s joylessly pursuing a soft rock career. Good bits are dotted through *Freeway Madness* (the heavy Fabs of Over The Moon), 1974's *Silk Torpedo* (Maybe You Tried's elfin boogie and lava-lamplit opener Dream) and 1976's *Savage Eye* (the 10cc schlock of My Song) but even with Led Zeppelin manager Peter Grant in their corner, they could not catch a break.

Having briefly powered down, May had a punky reboot with Taylor for 1980's Boomtown Rats-ish *Cross Talk* (fan Dave Gilmour helped them record demos), but their reliable money came on the Auf Wiedersehen, *Pet Sounds* European revival circuit. Later releases – 1999's *...Rage Before Beauty*, 2007's *Balboa Island*, 2015's *The Sweet Pretty Things (Are In Bed Now, Of Course...)* – tapped into *S.F. Sorrow*'s posthumous cachet, but May and Taylor's tastes skewed more rudimentary, as evidenced by the death watch blues of their final record, 2020's *Bare As Bone, Bright As Blood* – recorded after ill health had forced May off-stage.

"We shall never change," the singer told Disc vaingloriously in 1965. "I'd rather give up the business than conform." However, if The Pretty Things were compelled to move (slowly) with the times, what shines through *The Complete Studio Albums* is their grim determination to keep the show on the road. Their output reflects the reality of a career spent toiling to make ends meet and staring out at those midnight freeways. It can be ugly, occasionally a real slog, but the long dreary gaps are mitigated by moments of inspiration. Hard work, but it pays off.

Keeping the show on the road: The Pretty Things circa *Parachute*, 1970 (from left) Skip Alan, Phil May, Jon Povey, Wally Waller, Victor Unitt.

FILTER REISSUES

On the beach: Nancy & Lee reunite with baroque pop for adults.

Ron Joy

Nancy Sinatra & Lee Hazlewood

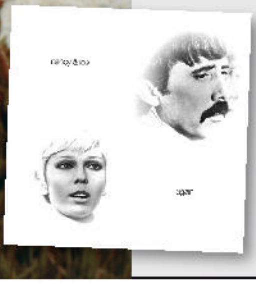
★★★★

Nancy & Lee Again

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC. CD/DL/LP

The unlikely duo's kiss-and-make-up second LP. Formats include 8-track cartridge.

WHEN LEE Hazlewood suddenly left LA to live in Sweden after the release of 1968's hit album *Nancy & Lee*, it surprised no one more than Nancy Sinatra. After waiting four years for Hazlewood to return and record a follow-up, *Nancy & Lee Again* doesn't have the carefree joy of the debut's tracks like Some Velvet Morning and Jackson, but is all the deeper for it. With more grandiose orchestral arrangements and the boldest of opening statements – the six-minute Arkansas Coal (Suite) – the sequel is baroque pop for grown-ups. This reissue tacks outtakes Machine Gun Kelly and Think I'm Coming Down on the end of highlights such as Paris Summer, Down From Dover, the anti-Vietnam Congratulations and Big Red Balloon, one of the weirdest ever break-up songs, but it's a hard ask to make what was already a near perfect album any better.



Andy Fyfe

PHAROAH SANDERS QUARTET
LIVE AT FABRIK

Pharoah Sanders Quartet

★★★★

Live At Fabrik Hamburg 1980

JAZZLINE CLASSICS. CD/LP

Late tenor saxophonist at his relaxed, mercurial best.

John Coltrane's mirror on *Ascension* and *Meditations*, Sanders continued his search for meaning in the '70s, exploring worldly rhythms and shamanistic free playing often at odds with the prevailing mood. Recorded at Wolfgang Kunert's New Jazz Festival, Curtis Lundy's bass and Idris Muhammad's drums provide a hypnotic platform for Sanders' harmonically bold extensions on four tracks from *Journey To The One*, intersected by two-chord parable The Creator Has A Master Plan. Both Sanders and pianist John Hicks frequently break their moorings, trading compelling long solos on Greetings To Idris before an off-the-scale 20-minute take on Dr Pitt steals the show. It distils the essence of Sanders' emotional grasp of multiphonics – delicacy and restraint ceding to wild screeching volleys as his instrument blares and cries.

Andy Cowan

The Free Music

★★★★

Free Music (Part I)

HABIBI FUNK. CD/DL/LP

Rare funk from Najib Alhoush's Libyan sextet.

One of Libya's biggest funk outfits of the '70s, The Free Music, led by singer/producer Najib Alhoush, were unheard outside of their home country, a result of the Gaddafi regime. But on the strength of this fabulous sampler they could easily have made it on the international stage. The nine tracks are taken from their two 1976 LPs – they made 10 in total – and are full of pulsating disco funk that's tough and tantalising, and created by a group akin to James Brown and Fela Kuti in their intuitive feel for rhythm. Highlights include Mathasebnish and Ana Qalbi Ehtar; both relentless grooves with choppy guitars, screaming solos and rapture-inducing brass. Every track, though, hurtles towards peak intensity.

Lois Wilson

Various

★★★★

The Birth Of Bop

CRAFT RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

The Savoy label's early-'50s 10-inch compilation series recreated and remastered.

Rebellious by nature, bebop was a direct reaction to the big band swing of wartime America. Savoy A&R man Teddy Reig came quick to its speedy call, signing and producing most of the cats on this breezy '50s compilation series, a boon for hemmed-in freestylers and frustrated sidemen. And while efforts by Stan Getz (Stan's Mood) or Charlie Parker (Romance Without Finance) are hardly explicit evocations of chains breaking, that revolution arrives via peak Fats Navarro (Hollerin' And Screamin'), JJ Johnson's fired-up riff on Coleman Hawkins' Spotlite (Mad Be Bop), and in Dexter Gordon's sharp lines and heavy vibrato (Dexter's Minor Mad) as he applies Parker's alto conception to his tenor sax. Beautifully packaged, the vinyl version comes in a 10-inch box with linernotes by Neil Tesser.

Andy Cowan

Various

★★★

Cherry Stars Collide: Dream Pop, Shoegaze & Ethereal Rock 1986-1995

CHERRY RED. CD

Sequel to the label's *Still In A Dream* shoegaze box.

The unique alchemies of Cocteau Twins and My Bloody Valentine were the core building blocks of both the dream pop and shoegaze scenes that followed; worlds in which effects pedals worked overtime in the service of sonic pearly-dewdrops and opaque visions. Label-wise, Creation were important but 4AD is especially integral here; *Cherry Stars Collide* is a Swallow song title, and nine more of their signings are present, including Lush, This Mortal Coil, the Cocteaus and AR Kane, who were first to coin the term 'dream pop' when self-labelling this compilation's opening track, Lolita. Adding 'ethereal rock' to the mix widens the goalposts, allowing Talk Talk, The Chameleons and David Sylvian to swell the ranks of recognisable names, and the odd mystifying entry too – on which planet is The Wake's English Rain ethereal, dream pop or shoegaze?

Martin Aston

McNeal & Niles

★★★

Thrust

WE ARE BUSY BODIES. DL/LP

An unfinished quality dominates 1979 lo-fi Ohio funk treasure.

Mostly recorded at night in Devo's Man-Ray studio, *Thrust* allowed lovers Wilbur Niles and Machelle McNeal to temporarily escape their day jobs in carpentry and the post office. Rough around the edges, whooshing wind noises only add to the charm of opener Ja Ja, whose descending bass lines and tight guitars all lead back to its more-ish organ motif. Summer Fun and Punk Funk ride fatter if less trenchant grooves, the duo saving the best for last with textured instrumental One Slave, One Gun. A cut above the standard Sly Stone-inspired funk of the time, thanks to McNeal's deep mix of Hammond, piano and synths, Niles's sequel the following year – *Thrust Too*, also re-released – forsook its naïve charms for greater technical accomplishment.

Andy Cowan

Inspiral Carpets

★★★★

The Complete Singles

MUTE/BMG. CD/DL/LP

Three discs of Madchester pop titans' singles, plus remixes, 1988 to 2015.

From Oldham, Inspiral Carpets – the classic line-up: guitarist Graham Lambert, singer Tom Hingley, bassist Martyn Walsh, drummer Craig Gill, organist Clint Boon – mixed The Seeds' Farfisa-led garage sounds with a free-spirited groove and hit with their early run of singles (Joe; Find Out Why; Move; This Is How It Feels) that for all their 'baggy' danceability often had kitchen sink lyrics. From 1994, I Want You, voiced by Mark E Smith, provided their last hit, by which time their former roadie Noel Gallagher was making waves with Oasis; the Inspirals split the following year. Re-forming in 2003 with the hopeful Come Back Tomorrow, after Hingley's 2011 departure they reunited with their first singer Stephen Holt, that line-up bookending this enjoyable compilation with 1988's Keep The Circle Around and 2015's Let You Down.

Lois Wilson

Curtain razer

When the 'Bayou Maharajah's' piano pyrotechnics warmed up audiences in Cold War Europe. By Charles Waring.

James Booker: the missing link between Chopin and Professor Longhair.

James Booker

★★★★

Behind The Iron Curtain Plus…

RWA. CD/DL

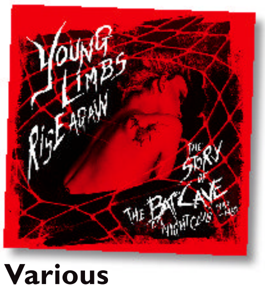
James Booker
Behind The Iron Curtain plus…

MEMORABLY DESCRIBED by Dr. John as "the best black, gay, one-eyed junkie piano genius New Orleans has ever produced," James Carroll Booker III was a spectacular one-off; a flamboyant, eyepatch-wearing maverick with a permanent limp who dubbed himself the "Bronze Liberace". His jaw-dropping virtuosity allowed him to mash up classical music, jazz, blues, ragtime and gospel with a blend of consummate ease and outrageous flair. For a man of such prodigious talent, Booker's studio output was surprisingly meagre, though thankfully live recordings abound. Perhaps none are quite as potent or compelling as the three concerts featured in this superbly annotated 5-CD retrospective capturing him alone on-stage in 1976-1977, taking the rambunctious free spirit of decadent New Orleans into the totalitarian heart of communist East Germany.

At the time of his '70s European sojourn, Booker, who scored a Top 3 US R&B hit with the soul-jazz instrumental Gonzo in 1962, seemed to be getting a career back on track that had been derailed for many years by heroin addiction. His resurrection began in 1973 when he appeared on Ringo Starr's *Ringo* album, and then in quick succession contributed to LPs by the Doobie Brothers, Maria Muldaur and LaBelle. Confirming Booker's rebirth, in 1976, Island Records released Booker's Joe Boyd-produced studio album *Junco Partner*, which resulted in the pianist being invited to tour Europe by promoter Norbert Hess, a blues fan from West Berlin who had met Booker in New Orleans in 1975. It's thanks to Hess that 47 years later, we can now hear what Booker sounded like at what was arguably the apex of his talent.

Just a few minutes into the first CD, you can appreciate why Booker has been hailed as a genius. His bluesy, anguished singing voice is hauntingly distinctive but it's his percussive piano playing, defined by a flamboyant, untamed romanticism, that astounds. Drawing on influences as varied as Beethoven and Jelly Roll Morton, Booker creates pocket piano symphonies using a unique cross-cultural sonic language characterised by pulsating polyrhythms and lushly sculpted filigrees. The way he seamlessly switches styles is mesmerising; at one point, he plays a brief snippet of Beethoven's delicate Für Elise which then morphs into an original New Orleans-style blues stomp called One Helluva Nerve. Another shapeshifting gem is Blue Minute Waltz, a jazzed-up classical piece that suggests Booker was the missing link between Chopin and Professor Longhair.

Booker once stated that his musical aim was "bridging the gap between classical music and the blues and ragtime and every other form of music" – and here, with these spectacular performances, he certainly achieves that goal. "I think I'm going to light up the curtain tonight," he tells the audience at East Berlin's Haus Der Junger Talente, patently underestimating his power as he proceeds to tear down the cultural wall separating the East from the West.



Various

★★★

Young Limbs Rise Again

DEMON/EDSEL. CD/DL/LP

Floor-fillers from '80s goth nightspot the Batcave.

In its three-year tenure in Soho, the Batcave was the missing link between the New Romantics and that black-clad strand of punk, originated by Siouxsie Sioux and Dave Vanian, known as goth. The club was started in July 1982 by dressy Bristolian loons Specimen, and initially enjoyed high-fashion patronage, until The Face deemed it "Dracula meets The Muppets", thereby consigning its kohl-eyed clientele to scab-picking cultishness. While the Batcave obviously aired Siouxsie, Cure, Sisters Of Mercy etc, this retro-playlisting exercise posits proto-goth as a broad church, with three CDs of dancefloor faves stretching to The B-52's, Associates, Meteors, even Shriekback, while another anthologises the (obvious) "glam-rock roots". As such, *Young Limbs…* isn't quite such a deep dive as Cherry Red's 2017 comp *Silhouettes & Statues*: only on CD4 are intriguingly forgotten Batcave live attractions like Furyo, Zero LeCrêche and Let's Wreck Mother unearthed. It's nonetheless a lurid trawl through that netherworld.

Andrew Perry

The Kinks

★★★★

The Journey: Part I

BMG. CD/DL/LP

Marking their 60th, 36 remastered songs in the key of sepia.

Swinging onwards and upwards would never suit Ray Davies's saturnine temperament. Where The Beatles dabbled in nostalgia as pit stops in their race into the future, The Kinks wallowed so deeply that retrospection – wistfully, fretfully, ironically – became who they were. And so to another anthology, agreed with brother Dave and grouped under thematic headings that refresh the songs by defamiliarising their settings. This first instalment is front-loaded with nothing later than 1975's No More Looking Back and, along with their latter years, several hits are presumably saved for *Part 2*. Though we kick off with 1964's lusty You Really Got Me, The Kinks' flaming youth lasted mere months before Ray's vision locked onto the rose-tinted rear-view mirror, only looking ahead through a glass darkly. That he so moves those who don't share his pessimism is a mark of his genius.

Mat Snow

David Bowie

★★★★★

Aladdin Sane 50th Anniversary

PARLOPHONE. LP

Half-speed mastered vinyl brings out the detail in an LP that's all about the detail.

1972's *Ziggy Stardust* had the pop tunes, dressing-up box brio and breakthrough energy, but it was '73's *Aladdin Sane* that announced David Bowie can do anything. Musically mischievous in its mix of warped jazz, intense rock, uncanny balladry, Brecht & Weill; lyrically frank and subversive in its hot mess of sex and madness: "Ziggy in America" always sold it short. It's Ziggy grown-up, debauched and disillusioned, looking in weirder places for his kicks. It's also a collection of amazing sounds lent extra dimensions by this remaster from original Trident Studio tapes. That means sturdier bottoms to Watch That Man and Cracked Actor – songs that already rock harder than any Bowie songs before or since, and more richness to its subtleties: the sci-fi synth warbles of Drive-In Saturday, or Trevor Bolder's fretless bass on the title track. That song would come to define Bowie's vocation – the man who sold experimental pop to the masses.

Danny Eccleston

DAVID BOWIE
ALADDIN SANE

Various

★★★★

Mainstream Disco Funk

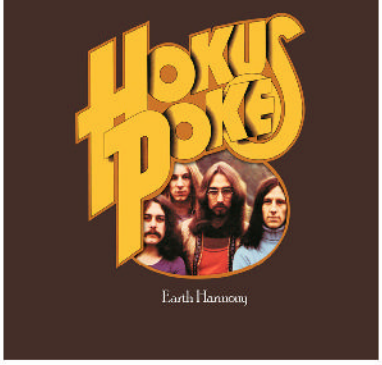
WE WANT SOUNDS. DL/LP

Flared trousered grooves from Bob Shad's New York label.

MAINSTREAM
DiscoFunk

Between 1974 and '76, Mainstream put out a series of disco singles that captured the dancefloor state of euphoria and got played on the New York underground. Only one included on this label cherry-pick was a commercial hit – the swooning No Rebate On Love by The Dramatics, not the line-up that recorded for Stax, but a short-lived reconfigured faction instead. Equally effective, though, are the flops: Three Ounces Of Love's Disco Man, a bright, enthusiastic burst of pop that sounds a lot like The Three Degrees; the Detroit trio of sisters later had an album released on Motown. Also compelling are Chocolate Syrup's We've Got To Get Together (Brotherly Love), a bubbly, Sly Stone-inspired gospel'n'rhythm number, and Crystal Image's overdriven Gonna Have A Good Time.

Lois Wilson



Stone Unturned

Rare earth: Hokus Poke rock Ealing Tech; (left) Oliver; (top left) Hokus Poke's Roger Clarke.

FILE UNDER...

Reign in Spain

From an unexpected corner of the world, comes a psych-pop psuccess pstory. By **Jim Irvin.**

LLEIDA, THE SMALLEST of Catalonia's four provincial capital cities, doesn't spring to mind as the place to base a hub for cultish psych, garage, folk and rock. But in 1995, that's where Antoni Gorgues launched the wonderful Guerssen label, simply because that's where he happened to be, staring at a future in a well-paid but boring office job, dreaming of doing something in music. "I was deep into the '90s garage-Mod scene that was going on all through Europe, and I started releasing music by some of those acts," he says. "The first album was by my Barcelona pals The Flashback Five, a very cool garage-psych band. I had no plan at all other than to follow the dream."

Several years in, he diversified into reissuing hard-to-find titles from the '60s and '70s – mostly garage, psychedelia and folk. In 2007, label manager Alex Carretero arrived with his own deep knowledge of those scenes. Those releases are now the label's prime focus. "The idea is to bring to life albums that went unnoticed at the time but are great," says Carretero. "We try to avoid reissuing albums just because they're very rare or expensive. They have to say something to us."

This has led to unexpected success stories like Wicked Lady, an unknown British power trio operating between 1968-72, who never managed to release an album in their lifetime. But their demos, collected onto two double albums, are among Guerssen's best-sellers, as are other '70s hard rock rarities, Farm, Orang-Utan and Irish Coffee.

Private pressings are a fertile area – like Oliver's acid folk super-rarity *Standing Stone* (a sequel is coming too). And then, of course, there are major-label releases that vanished without trace. A nice recent example is Hokus Poke's *Earth Harmony*, an appealing amalgam of late psych, early prog and timeless boogie issued on Vertigo in 1972 – and worth £700 if you can find one in good condition. It's been reissued on CD a few times but is now back on vinyl in a smart facsimile of its original die-cut sleeve. Guerssen also distributes LPs from other boutique labels around the world. There are currently over 1,700 titles on their website.

"We're very strict with quality control for our vinyl releases," says Carretero. "We take a lot of care over audio transfer and mastering. And we've checked entire pressings, record by record, to avoid warped copies, which is today's pressing pandemic." With pressing delays affecting all vinyl releases, Guerssen have adopted a strict rule not to announce an album's release until they have it in their warehouse.

Not exactly a Poem...
the Flashback Five

Wicked Lady
Psychotic Overkill
Guerssen

Bronco Bullfrog

Twenty-eight titles are in stock ready to be marketed throughout the year. Among them are: the 1972 self-titled LP by forgotten Fillmore West regulars Filipino-American funk troupe Dakila; '90s UK psych-pop wizards Bronco Bullfrog's delightful, sprawling self-titled set, which feels like Oasis colliding with XTC, now on double vinyl; *Pop Music*, a cute piece of French library music issued under the name Structure in 1970 to cash in on the vogue for flutes in rock; *Women And Children First*, lost psych by brilliantly named Welsh band Ancient Grease; and a gold vinyl repressing of The Action's legendary lost album, *Rolled Gold*.

"It's pretty hard to do all that work in advance, and a huge economic investment," says Gorgues. "But we're able to do it because we've been established for so long. It's tough for newer, smaller labels." And though Lleida is hardly the centre of the musical universe, being based there gives Guerssen, as a big fish in a niche market, what Gorgues calls "the power of periphery".

"How did following the dream turn out?" I ask him.

"At this stage, I suppose you could say that it worked out fine!"

"An appealing amalgam of late psych, early prog and timeless boogie – worth £700 if you can find one in good condition."

Guerssen Records (3)

King of the castle

The album that began Elton's staggering run of success turns 50. By John Aizlewood.

Elton John
ZOOM!
click
Hercules
To a real swell guy from Max and Bern

Zooming up the charts: Elton John was searching for songwriterly authenticity.

Elton John

★★★★

Honky Château

UMR/EMI. CD/LP

HONKY CHATEAU
ELTON JOHN

IT SEEMS almost too much to take in now. When *Honky Château* swept to the top of the American charts in the summer of 1972 – the first Elton John album to reach Number 1 anywhere – it heralded a staggering run of global success. His subsequent six albums, including *Greatest Hits*, followed it. More staggering still, this was the beginning, not the peak, and over half a century later, he's enjoying Farewell Yellow Brick Road, the highest-grossing tour of all time.

And yet *Honky Château* doesn't sound like a massive album. It's a pared down, more intimate version of its predecessor, *Madman Across The Water*. Restless after *Madman* flopped in the UK, John retained producer Gus Dudgeon, who overcame his reluctance to use John's touring band in the studio, decamped to the "honky" Château d' Hérouville just north of Paris and hired Jean-Luc Ponty to add electric violin to Mellow and Amy.

This time around, there are no undiscovered songs, but the album is re-mastered, there are Château demos of everything bar Amy and Mona Lisas And Mad Hatters, and eight live versions (no Slave or I Think I'm Going To Kill Myself) culled from a Royal Festival Hall show in London three months before release.

John's piano at the Festival Hall brought a stentorian new dimension to a sped-up Rocket Man (I Think It's Going To Be A Long Long Time) and the demos offer the sense of a band working out how to get the best from John's freewheeling melodies. In the end, they turned out to be just what was required.

Unquestionably, John was searching for songwriterly authenticity. The sepia sleeve saw an unshaven John pitching himself midway between Stephen Stills and a *Surf's Up* Beach Boy, but Mellow and Susie (Dramas) foreshadowed his work with Leon Russell, while Salvation takes a country detour as the band add what would become their trademark harmonies.

Lyrically, Bernie Taupin was as wry and off-kilter as the emerging Randy Newman, examining suicide on I Think I'm Going To Kill Myself and being, by turns, oblique, lascivious and sentimental. Slave – another Taupin excursion into American history – was actually about slavery, while Mona Lisas And Mad Hatters saw a wide-eyed suburban English boy experiencing New York for the first time.

The slight Honky Cat was (and remains) the runt of the Elton John singles litter, but Rocket Man was arguably the moment Taupin began writing about John as well as for him, albeit with added, very much of its time, space imagery. *Honky Château* might not be Elton John's best album (it's up there, but the catalogue is too big and too varied for such simplicities), but, setting the stage for global conquest, it's surely his most pivotal.

Barrie Wentzell

Rubinho E Mauro Assumpção

★★★★

Perfeitamente, Justamente Quando Cheguei

MR BONGO. CD/LP

Reissue of unjustly obscure Brazilian folk-psych LP.

Inspired by West Coast psychedelia as well as their MPB contemporaries, the keyboardist and arranger Ruban Barra and the singer/producer Mauro Assumpção formed a short-lived group in Rio in the early 1970s which yielded the sole LP *Perfeitamente, Justamente Quando Cheguei* (Perfectly, Just When I Arrived). This beautiful LP is sensitively rendered and arranged with skill by the pair; as Assumpção sings convincingly of natural wonders, human tunnel vision, and the many twists and turns we face on the road of life, guitarist Rick Ferreira provides expressive lead lines somewhere between Jorma Kaukonen and David Gilmour, and Barra bolsters proceedings with communicative organ and piano melodies. The result is an appealing blend of pysch-folk and Brazilian popular forms, with Bloco Da Visão a driving dance groove, Os Olhos a slow bossa nova, and Tá Tudo Aí a foot-tapping samba.

David Katz

The Good Samaritans

★★★★

No Food Without Taste If By Hunger

ANALOG AFRICA. LP

Limited orange vinyl reissue of rare Edo funk oddity.

Fusing James Brown-style bass lines and 4/4 drumbeats with traditional Edo musical elements from southern Nigeria, Edo funk emerged in Benin City in the early 1970s as a cosmopolitan nightclub hybrid, Victor Uwaifo swiftly becoming its leading star. The composer and multi-instrumentalist Osakpamwan Ohenhen subsequently helped the form to develop as rhythm guitarist in Idemudia Cole's Talents Of Benin before producing his own work under the alias Brother Angel Philosopher Okundaye, backed by a band he dubbed The Good Samaritans. On *No Food Without Taste If By Hunger*, Ohenhen delivers his philosophical messages in Hausa and Bini atop The Good Samaritans' tight and energetic grooves; opener Onughara is highlife set to a funk backbeat, peppered by bright horns and a funky drummer break, Ughamwen-Rhienenemwen veers towards disco, while Ekhueghamunu has a spongy reggae undercurrent.

David Katz

Dizzy Gillespie

★★★

Portrait Of Jenny

BBE. DL/LP

Trumpet maestro's Latin jazz gem resurfaces.

Famous for his enormous puffed-out cheeks, bent trumpet, and dazzling virtuosity, the large-lunged Gillespie led the bebop charge in the late 1940s but by 1970, when he joined the New York indie Perception at the age of 53, his days as a music revolutionary were waning. Even so, *Portrait Of Jenny*, his second and best LP for the label, showed that as his twilight years approached, Gillespie's creative fire still burned brightly. The LP revisits the Afro-Cuban musical landscape that the South Carolina hornblower had first discovered in 1947 via his innovative fusion of bebop with Latin rhythms. It consists of four excellent self-written numbers, the best of which is Me 'N' Them, an epic piece that marries searing jazz improv with percolating Latin percussion. The legendary Havana-born conga player, Carlos 'Patato' Valdes, is among Gillespie's sidemen, infusing the music with an authentic Cuban flavour.

Charles Waring

The Stranglers

★★★

Feline

BMG. CD/DL/LP

1983's Top 5 set now on pink and red double vinyl/2-CD, with nine bonus tracks.

Even by The Stranglers' quixotic standards, *Feline* is a curious beast. Lucratively signed to Epic after Golden Brown's unanticipated success, this seventh studio album counter-intuitively muted the band's hallmark bite: Spanish guitars conjoined with waveform synths and Jet Black playing the dreaded electronic Simmons drum kit. Despite an intriguing conceptual basis – marrying cold north European textures with Mediterranean warmth – the shortage of consistently strong material rendered *Feline*'s somnolent, disconnected production aura unsustainable over an entire record (B-side Savage Breast, included on the extras disc, was easily worthy of making the final cut). The experiment was vindicated in spectacular fashion, however, by The European Female, written and sung by JJ Burnel, his hallmark bass awoken from slumber to prowl edgily around Hugh Cornwell's playful acoustic picking. In 2023, this declaration of love for a continent ("we'll be together for a thousand years") feels especially bittersweet.

Keith Cameron

the stranglers
FELINE

Top ranking: The Fabulous Counts (clockwise from top left) Jim White, Mose Davis, Demetrius Cates, Raoul Keith Mangrum, Leroy Emmanuel, Andrew Gibson.

CREDITS

Tracks: It's A Man's Man's Man's World/ Simple Song/Hey Jude/The Bite/ Soulful Strut/Dirty Red/Who's Making Love/Scrambled Eggs/The Other Thing/Girl From Kenya/Jan Jan

Personnel: Mose Davis (organ)/Leroy Emmanuel (guitar)/ Demetrius 'Demo' Cates (alto saxophone)/Jim White (tenor saxophone)/Andrew Gibson (drums)/ Raoul Keith Mangrum (percussion)

Producer: Richard 'Popcorn' Wylie; Russ Terrana (engineer)

Released: 1969

Recorded: Tera Shirma Studios, Detroit

Current availability: Spotify

Noblesse Funk

This month's scorching rediscovery: a forgotten Detroit gem from the R&B cut-out bins.

The Fabulous Counts

Jan Jan

COTILLION, 1969

IN JANUARY 1969, young Detroit six-piece The Fabulous Counts gawped in disbelief when their maddeningly funky debut 45 Jan Jan crashed into the US R&B Top 50.

"It just took off like a rocket," laughs the band's former guitarist Leroy Emmanuel, now 76, recalling how the hypnotic instrumental, with its stabbing horns, blues guitar licks and jazzy organ, opened their account for producer Ollie McLaughlin's indie label Moira. Sounding like Booker T & The M.G.'s cranked up on steroids, Jan Jan enjoyed a chart run that caught both group and label by surprise. It also attracted the attention of Atlantic Records, who signed the band to its Cotillion subsidiary and sent them back to the studio to record an album post-haste.

The group began in 1965 as The Counts, founded by organist Mose Davis with saxophonists James White (tenor) and Demetrius 'Demo' Cates (alto), drummer Andrew Gibson and percussionist (and occasional sax player) Raoul Keith Mangrum. The group didn't have a bassist and relied, like the organ-led jazz combos of the late '50s and early '60s, on foot-pedalled bass notes from Davis's Hammond B3.

Emmanuel joined the group after he discovered them jamming in a Detroit music store. Though just 18, the guitarist was already a seasoned R&B veteran. "I played the Apollo when I was 17, back in '64," he reveals. "I was still in high school at the time and backed up Dionne Warwick!"

After impressing the group with his fretwork, Emmanuel was invited to join them; not long after, Davis relinquished control of the band to the guitarist, who recalls: "Because I had so much experience – putting together sets and shows – he called a meeting with the others and said, 'He knows a lot more about doing this than I do.'"

Melding jazz with blues and funk into an earthy R&B recipe of their own, The Counts rapidly became an attraction on Detroit's club circuit. The group's popularity brought them to the attention of local promoter Fred McClure, who became their manager and persuaded McLaughlin to record them. They played him Jan Jan, and McLaughlin, whose previous discoveries included Del Shannon, was sufficiently impressed to release the track as a single. By then, at the urging of their manager, The Counts had become The Fabulous Counts.

After Jan Jan hit the charts, Detroit singer-songwriter/producer Richard 'Popcorn' Wylie took the helm for the band's debut LP. "He was a smart guy," recalls Emmanuel. "He could play piano, had a great ear for music. It helped a lot."

The band supplemented five pulsating, horn-heavy originals with covers of recent pop and R&B hits; front-loading the LP with gutsy versions of James Brown's It's A Man's Man's Man's World, Sly Stone's Simple Song and The Beatles' Hey Jude, all humming with the kind of tight-but-loose funkiness neo-soul acts worldwide would sell their grandmothers for. "We did all these songs just trying to make up the numbers," says Emmanuel, self-effacingly. "We recorded the album in a day, and mixed it the next."

Their own material included driving horns work-out Dirty Red, the quizzical Scrambled Eggs and cyclical groover The Other Thing. Another band original, The Bite, stands out for Emmanuel. "All I played was one note through the whole song," he laughs. "When we did it live, we just stretched it out no end – we were the type of band that would play a song for 15 minutes, 'cos everybody would solo – and it drove the audience nuts. As soon as I started hitting that note, people would pack the dancefloor. We just played like maniacs."

Jan Jan came in an eye-catching cover, depicting the sharp-suited group standing in a field still smoking from crop burning. "In Detroit for a while, they were calling us 'The Black Beatles' because we wore these Nehru-type suits," says Emmanuel. "We went out and bought these green suits and had black felt collars put on them."

Though their debut single sold an estimated 80,000 copies, the parent album didn't make the charts. Next single Get Down People – their first to feature vocals – just dented the US Hot 100 (in 1990 it was sampled by Brit-hoppers Outlaw Posse, whose Bello B rapped on The KLF's hit What Time Is Love). Reverting to The Counts, the group joined Funkadelic at Armen Boladian's Westbound label in 1971 and recorded the LP *What's Up Front That – Counts*. After that, they cut *Love Sign* and *Funk Pump* for Atlanta's Aware label before splitting in 1976. Emmanuel then played in disco king Hamilton Bohannon's band, worked for Motown and, in 1996, played on Jay-Z's *Reasonable Doubt*. Between 1992 and 2007 he also led an Ontario-based band called LMT Connection, and, in 2009, briefly revived The Counts with original members Mose Davis and Demo Cates.

Reflecting on *Jan Jan*, Emmanuel admits it was hastily assembled – "It was a rush job because the single was selling like wildfire" – but nonetheless is proud of what the group achieved. "We never became big stars," he says, "but people remember us and are still talking about The Counts. I'm really happy about that."

Charles Waring

THE FABULOUS COUNTS
JAN JAN
Cotillion

> "It drove the audience nuts… we just played like maniacs."
> LEROY EMMANUEL

Photography by Panorama Studios

Your Mother
Should Know

Brad Mehldau
plays
The Beatles

Your Mother
Should Know
Brad Mehldau
plays
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Warehouse party band: Wilco, 2005 (from left) Glenn Kotche, Nels Cline, Mikael Jorgenson, Jeff Tweedy, Pat Sansone, John Stirratt.

Wilco

The progress of a great American band – via Chicago. By **John Mulvey**.

THE LAST TIME this writer met up with Jeff Tweedy, at a 2019 show in Brussels, the imminent release of his band's eleventh album was giving Tweedy cause to ponder where Wilco fitted in. "One of the things I think is strange about my [current] antipathy towards rock music," he considered, "is that it's happening at the same time as I'm becoming more confident Wilco is a rock band unlike any other still walking the earth. Does that make us a dinosaur? No, I think it's definitely valid."

It's a curious, self-reflexive way of praising your band, especially when that band have been routinely lauded as one of America's best for the last 25 years. But perhaps Tweedy's questioning of what it means to be a rock band, and what a rock band can be, has been crucial to Wilco's brilliance for a quarter of a century.

Over 12 studio albums, multiple side projects, hefty box sets and a busy live schedule, Wilco's ubiquity has been rooted in their deft, subtle way of avoiding cliché and expectations. To some, they are a cornerstone of the Americana movement, however uncomfortable they've sometimes been with the tag. To others, they are the much-vaunted "American Radiohead", worrying away at rock convention with a restless desire to stretch the form. A natural successor to R.E.M., or to the Grateful Dead? Wilco accommodate it all, taking their place in a great tradition of American rock bands while playfully subverting that tradition as they go.

Success has not always felt guaranteed, however. When Tweedy formed the band in 1994, it was his old partner in Son Volt, Jay Farrar, who was widely expected to have the more significant career. Wilco's progress for a decade was one of incremental triumphs achieved in the face of daunting challenges, both personal and professional. Their second two decades have been less tempestuous, with a long-stabilised line-up, but no less creatively rewarding. Hence the challenges of this How To Buy: a band notable for their consistent excellence, in perpetual musical flux. "[The Beatles] were pushing to express themselves in ways they'd never heard anybody express themselves," said Tweedy in 2020. "That's basically art. I want to try and find that."

> "Wilco is a rock band unlike any other still walking the planet."
> **JEFF TWEEDY**

Getty (2)

CAST YOUR VOTES...

This month you chose your Top 10 Wilco LPs. Next month we want your Wayne Shorter Top 10. Send selections via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or e-mail to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject 'How To Buy Wayne Shorter' and we'll print the best comments.

WILCO Kicking Television LIVE IN CHICAGO

10 **Wilco** Kicking Television (Live In Chicago)

NONESUCH, 2005

You say: "As *YHF* and *Ghost* are the pinnacle, I'd say *Kicking Television* – a storming mix of both." Ruskus, via Twitter

If Wilco's first 10 years were marked by interpersonal volatility – Jay Bennett's tenure being especially frictional – the ensuing 19 have been strikingly solid: the line-up that came together just before these 2005 live recordings a constant ever since. Those gigging years have only seen Wilco's flexible virtuosity increase. But *Kicking Television* is a band also starting at the top of their game, with Nels Cline establishing a Verlaine/Lloyd-style rapport with Jeff Tweedy. *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* songs beefed up, and there was a plaintive version of Charles Wright's 1969 peace anthem, Comment: "If all men are truly brothers..."

4 **Wilco** Sky Blue Sky

NONESUCH, 2007

You say: "The warmest and most democratic document of Wilco's nimblest line-up. Detractors claim it lacks experimentation – it's just hiding in the arrangements." Christopher Bruno, via Twitter

The first studio effort by Wilco's most enduring line-up – Tweedy, Stirratt, Cline, Kotche, Mikael Jorgensen (keys) and Pat Sansone (keys/guitars) – initially seemed surprisingly safe; mellow craftsmanship that could almost pass as AOR, where many expected radical fireworks. The songs, though, were some of Wilco's most gorgeous, often co-compositions that were gradually revealed as nuanced gems. The fireworks were there, smuggled into the great tunes, Side With The Seeds and especially Impossible Germany opening into showcases for elevated groupthink, with Nels Cline's jazz-rock soloing to the fore.

WILCO
CRUEL
COUNTRY

9 Wilco
Cruel Country

DBPM, 2022

You say: "Wilco at their most accessible and playful. One great song after another." Keith Bell, via Twitter

Tweedy's longtime exasperation with the Americana tag has led him to some musically extreme places, and in 2005 he told me, "[Alt-country] has become a very conservative movement that's not really a movement. It's stagnant." The twelfth and most recent Wilco studio album, however, archly leaned into concepts of American roots music – and ideas about the state of their nation. An opportunity, then, to showcase the band's casual mastery of classic folk songwriting, but also to be slyly subversive, as they slipped an understated avant-jam into Bird Without A Tail/Base Of My Skull. *Cruel Country* was a strategic double bluff: a self-proclaimed 'country' record that was often as far as ever from being a conventional one.

8 Wilco
Wilco (The Album)

NONESUCH, 2009

You say: "Perfectly balanced between folk rock, Beatles-esque pop, straight-up rock and prog. Like a sample map of a great record collection." Kai-Anders Nilsson, via Twitter

Another pet gripe of Tweedy – that his fans required him to be tormented as a default – was challenged head on by the bright, liberated, sometimes rather goofy seventh Wilco album: "A sonic shoulder for you to cry on," he promised in the self-referential power pop of theme tune, Wilco (The Song). While a fraught motorik workout (Bull Black Nova) did make the cut, Cline afire, other songs on *Wilco (The Album)* were Tweedy's most Beatles-adjacent efforts since *Summerteeth*. The twist this time being that the sentiments of, say, You Never Know (a vibrational *All Things Must Pass* stomper) were ruefully optimistic rather than spiked.

7 Wilco
Ode To Joy

DBPM, 2019

You say: "A bleached-out classic. The songs could've been on *YHF* in a different form… a record that sounds punctured and punch drunk." Graeme, via Twitter

A political concept album of sorts, though way subtler and more artful than the norm, *Ode To Joy* initially sounded like groggier kin to 2016's mostly acoustic *Schmilco*. But beneath Glenn Kotche's martial drums, a lot more was going on. "The idea of making a rock record is distasteful to me at this moment," Tweedy told me. "We wanted to make really, really small music gigantic." Hence "monolithic folk" songs that were both sombre and humane, anthemic by stealth, and packed with micro-detail and invention deep in the mix. Moving, too: "Remember when wars would end?" Tweedy sings in Before Us. "Now when something's dead/We try to kill it again."

Wilco
Star Wars

6 Wilco
Star Wars

DBPM, 2015

You say: "My introduction to them. *Star Wars* still stands out as distinct from their usual sound. Concise and less serious." Daniel Slocombe, via Twitter

A surprise release, given away online, and the band's shortest album at only 33 minutes, *Star Wars* could easily be misconstrued as marginalia: even the sleeve's kitschy cat painting from their studio kitchen wall signalled irreverence. But while the songs often veered towards sparky garage art-rock, they were *terrific* sparky garage art-rock. Cranked-up experimentation came compressed into three-minute gobbets and cut with nagging hooks; eg, Random Name Generator, their catchiest tune since *YHF*'s Heavy Metal Drummer. And alongside frenetic post-punk (Pickled Ginger) there were more conventional Wilco triumphs, notably the cumulative intensity of You Satellite.

WILCO · BEING THERE

5 Wilco
Being There

REPRISE, 1996

You say: "The same menace and energy you got with The Replacements – roots Americana uncomfortable in its own skin." John Allison, via Twitter

1995's Wilco debut, *AM*, had at least established Tweedy's bona fides as a bandleader, away from Jay Farrar in Uncle Tupelo. But it was sprawling follow-up *Being There* that vigorously asserted his rapidly evolving band's range and ambition. Alt-country still figured (Forget The Flowers was a pitch-perfect Gram Parsons homage), alongside ragged-assed Stones boogies and questing, less generic pieces like Misunderstood that would bedrock the Wilco canon. Plus, an auspicious newcomer in the ranks alongside Tweedy and bass-playing lifer John Stirratt, in the shape of multi-instrumentalist and powerpop classicist Jay Bennett. His moment would come, soon enough.

summerteethwilco

3 Wilco
Summerteeth

REPRISE, 1999

You say: "The peak of the collaboration between Jeff and Jay. Every melody, every guitar lick is catchy without being naive." Oscar García, via Twitter

While Wilco's 21st century excellence has proved yet again how great art isn't inextricably bound up with suffering, that myth fixed onto Tweedy circa *Summerteeth*. Wilco's third was an elaborate chamber pop confection, bathed in the sunshine possibilities of The Beatles and Beach Boys, but earthed in Tweedy's personal problems: his relationship issues, drugs and, fundamentally, depression. Tweedy and Jay Bennett obsessively piled on the mellotrons to mask the trauma, but the record's brilliance lies in its light and shade. "I was trying to figure out what I was feeling," Tweedy told me in 2020. "But it was much easier for me to tolerate when I'd layered a disclaimer of ornamentation."

yankee hotel foxtrot / wilco

2 Wilco
Yankee Hotel Foxtrot

NONESUCH, 2001

You say: "Stark, bleak, gorgeous, Tweedy's *Plastic Ono Band* put through O'Rourke's washing cycle." Matthew Horton, via Twitter

Another drama on multiple fronts, with record label grief and a power struggle between the traditionalist Bennett and the increasingly adventurous Tweedy that only ended with the former leaving Wilco. Now, though, with a mammoth 2022 box set mapping its evolution, *YHF*'s brilliance seems ever more distinct from its backstory. New drummer Glenn Kotche brought unorthodox rhythms, while mixer Jim O'Rourke used process, texture and noise to facilitate Tweedy's escape from what he later described as the "pastiche" of *Summerteeth*. But the radio static and conceptual dislocation complemented Tweedy and Bennett's songs: poignant, fragile; a lot more resilient than first appeared.

Wilco ≤ a ghost is born

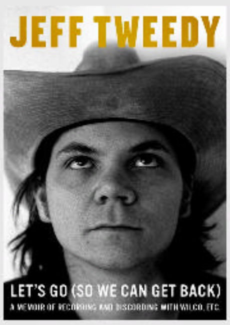
1 Wilco
A Ghost Is Born

NONESUCH, 2004

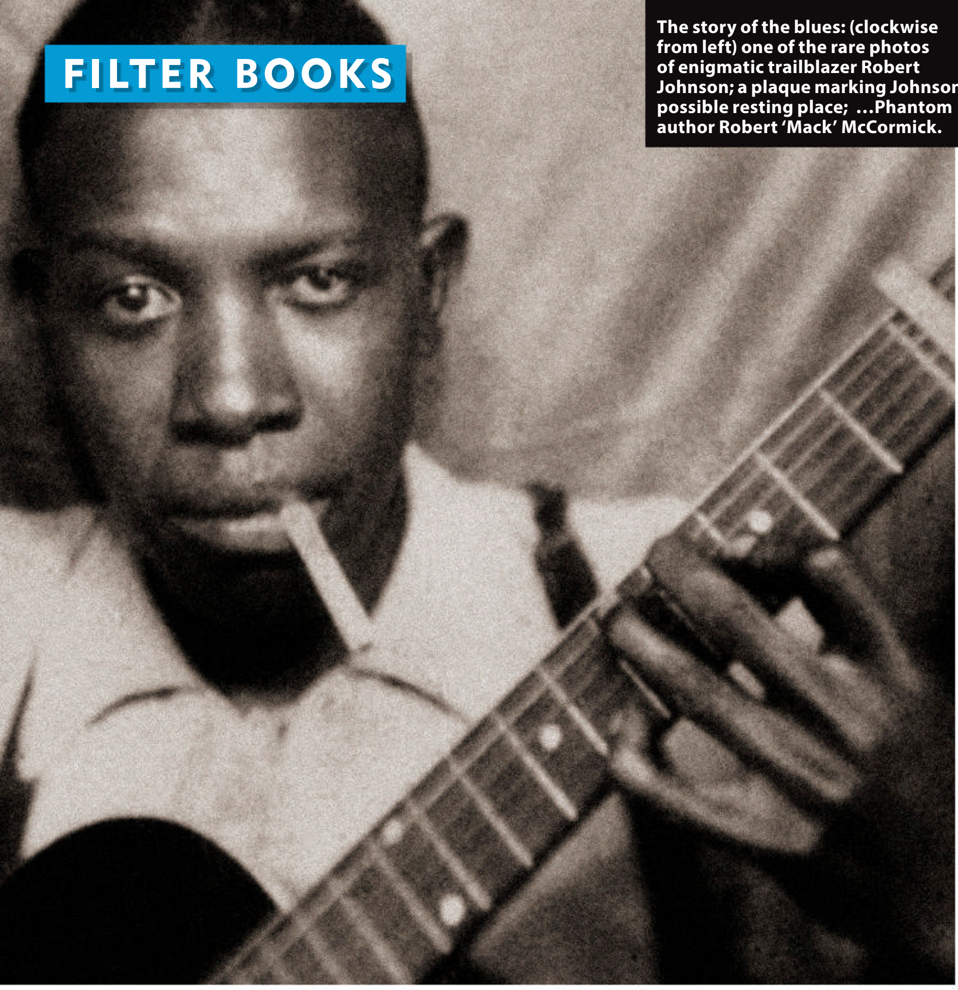
You say: "Not only my favourite Wilco album but my favourite mixing and production on an album. That all-reverb-sucked-away method of Jim O'Rourke's reveals hidden playfulness." Riggings, via Twitter

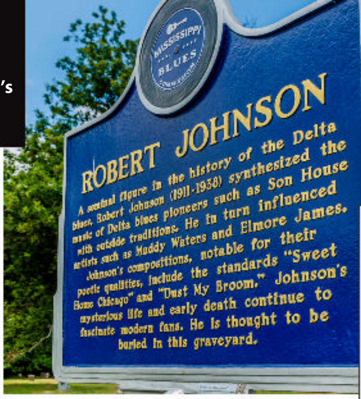
YHF is often tagged Wilco's masterpiece, but its follow-up might be even better. Record label support, Jay Bennett's departure, and embedding Jim O'Rourke as producer ensured avant-garde principles were baked into *AGIB*. The sound, less processed than *YHF*, could accommodate Band-like country soul (Theologians) and Krautrock supergrooves (Spiders (Kidsmoke)) as well as fractured guitar improv. But Tweedy was addicted to painkillers to combat his migraines: Less Than You Think, 15 minutes of minimalist drone, was designed to mirror a debilitating headache. A moving document of pain, improved by the knowledge Tweedy recovered. Plus, it's his own great guitar album: those spraying solos, between Neil Young and Derek Bailey, were Tweedy, not the as-yet-to-join Nels Cline.

NOW DIG THIS


JEFF TWEEDY
LET'S GO (SO WE CAN GET BACK)
A MEMOIR OF RECORDING AND DISCORDING WITH WILCO, ETC.

There are genuinely no bad albums in the Wilco catalogue, but you're especially encouraged towards 2011's *The Whole Love* (One Sunday Morning is an all-timer) and 2014 rarities box *Alpha Mike Foxtrot*. Ditto Jeff Tweedy's solo albums (try 2018's *Warm* first), and the two albums he made as a third of Loose Fur alongside Jim O'Rourke and Glenn Kotche, critical adjuncts to *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* and *A Ghost Is Born*. Tweedy's books are good, too – start with 2018 memoir Let's Go (So We Can Get Back) – while Greg Kot's 2004 biog, Wilco: Learning How To Die, is a useful primer on the band's eventful early years. To experience the full stress of the *YHF* sessions, Sam Jones's 2002 documentary I Am Trying To Break Your Heart is a fly-on-the-wall revelation.





MISSISSIPPI BLUES COMMISSION

ROBERT JOHNSON

A seminal figure in the history of the Delta blues, Robert Johnson (1911-1938) synthesized the music of Delta blues pioneers such as Son House with outside traditions. He in turn influenced artists such as Muddy Waters and Elmore James. Johnson's compositions, notable for their poetic qualities, include the standards "Sweet Home Chicago" and "Dust My Broom." Johnson's mysterious life and early death continue to fascinate modern fans. He is thought to be buried in this graveyard.

The story of the blues: (clockwise from left) one of the rare photos of enigmatic trailblazer Robert Johnson; a plaque marking Johnson's possible resting place; …Phantom author Robert 'Mack' McCormick.

Mystery train

The problematic masterpiece by the blues fiend who chased Robert Johnson's ghost finally arrives. By **Grayson Haver Currin**.

Biography Of A Phantom: A Robert Johnson Blues Odyssey

★★★★

Robert 'Mack' McCormick; Edited by John W. Troutman

SMITHSONIAN BOOKS. £24

SHOOT SOUTH along Highway 61 from the lobby of Memphis's Peabody Hotel, the legendary spot where folk wisdom holds that the Mississippi Delta truly begins. Not far beyond the state line, a constellation of sturdy roadside plaques marking the Mississippi Blues Trail will begin to limn the state's complicated and earth-quaking musical heritage, an inheritance shaped by slavery and Jim Crow that forever altered the way the world sounded. "The boyhood home of blues icon Robert Johnson," one will soon read near a stately curve in the country's Great River, not long before you reach towering modern casinos. "Johnson lived here with his family in a tenant shack by the levees during the 1920s."

Oh, if only spotting the little white shack had been that easy for Mack McCormick. In 1969, the professional blues sleuth began heading repeatedly west to the Delta, doggedly chasing mere whispers of Johnson, whose influence was rivalled only by his enigma. Johnson would have been just 57 then, but he'd already been dead from unknown causes – gunshot? Poison? Knife fight? – for 30 years, all traces of a brief life presumably washed into the Gulf Of Mexico long ago. (McCormick believed, briefly, he might actually be alive.)

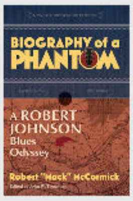
McCormick became a relentless gumshoe, using every bit of biographical flotsam to create grids of where Johnson might have lived, where his relatives might remain. He knocked on doors, rode on a decommissioned school bus that had been turned into a mobile grocery store, haunted pool halls long after his welcome was worn thin, and sat dejectedly in his car until old-timers slowly began to eke out memories of an always itinerant and introverted cad who had been far more interested in steel strings than iron ploughshares. McCormick found not only the boyhood home where that marker now stands just south of Memphis, but also the precise setting and circumstances of Johnson's painful poisoning, plus an incomplete death certificate.

Over the next half-decade, McCormick shaped those findings into this incisive, empathetic, and insightful musical spy tale. Biography Of A Phantom is as much about his dizzying pursuit of Johnson than the fragmented portrait he found at its end. Beautifully rendered and unabashedly probing, …Phantom is folklore as both fable and action-adventure novel.

McCormick's real worries, though, began after the sleuthing ended: long hamstrung by bouts of mania and depression, he cracked after Johnson's sisters began working with another scribe. Unpublished until now, his problematic masterpiece languished in a series of conspiratorial rewrites and paranoid contract disputes. His book had presented a thoughtful approach to being the white tourist in historically benighted Black America; his subsequent actions, however, served as a grim testament to the avarice and entitlement endemic to the worst branches of the music industry and academia alike.

But the United States' powerhouse museum, the Smithsonian, has finally made good on the book. After McCormick's death in 2015, his daughter donated his monolithic archive to the institution, and this first-at-last edition represents a massive step forward in grappling with his complicated legacy. Expertly edited and introduced by archivist and curator John Troutman, the finished Phantom unapologetically pulls McCormick's manuscript into this moment. Troutman raises incumbent issues of race, privilege, and cultural plunder with critical force, then stands back to let McCormick sort through this tangled tale himself. Almost a century after they were recorded, Johnson's acoustic blues still sparkle with wonder and mystery; more than a half-century after it was written, McCormick's book only amplifies the intrigue.

> "…Phantom is folklore as both fable and action-adventure novel."



WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Johnson bought his guitar via mail-order by tending to the horses of wealthy white men playing polo where he lived just below Mississippi's northern border.
- Johnson was an enthusiastic childhood harmonica player, quickly buying three in different keys after someone swiped his first.
- After Johnson's death, his proud brother and former musical mentor, Leroy, kept his guitar and continued playing, hoping to keep up this new family business.
- Johnson's son and eventual sole heir, Claud, lived beside bluesman Houston Stackhouse, who had often played with his father but apparently did not know about the relation.
- Before finding Johnson's death certificate and witnesses to that final night in Greenwood, Miss., McCormick investigated 23 possible places he'd died.

Alamy (2)

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THE NEW PORNOGRAPHERS
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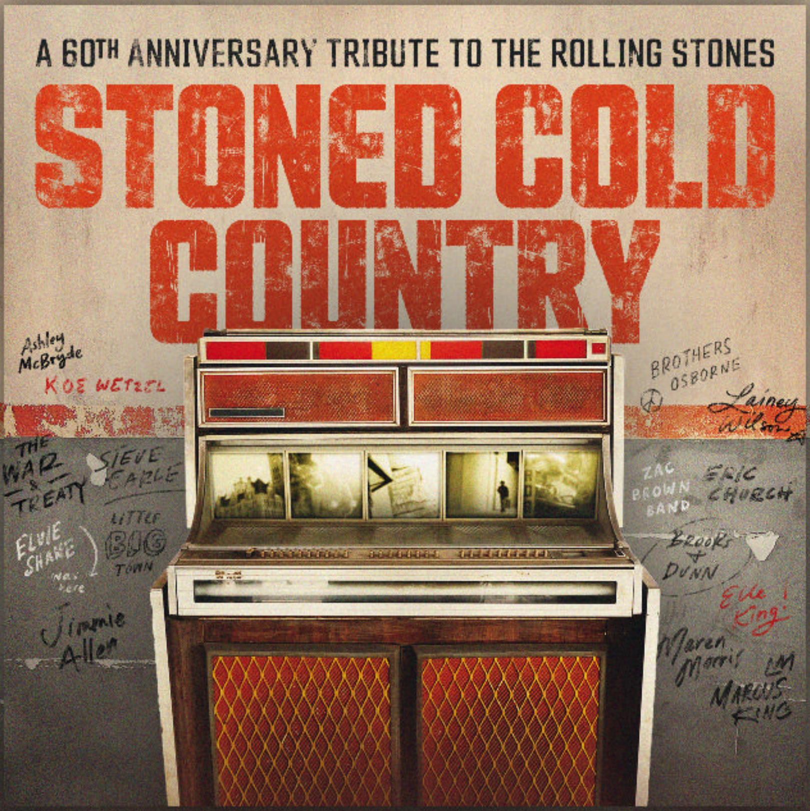
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LOVE LETTER
BACK TO
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STEVE EARLE • THE WAR & TREATY
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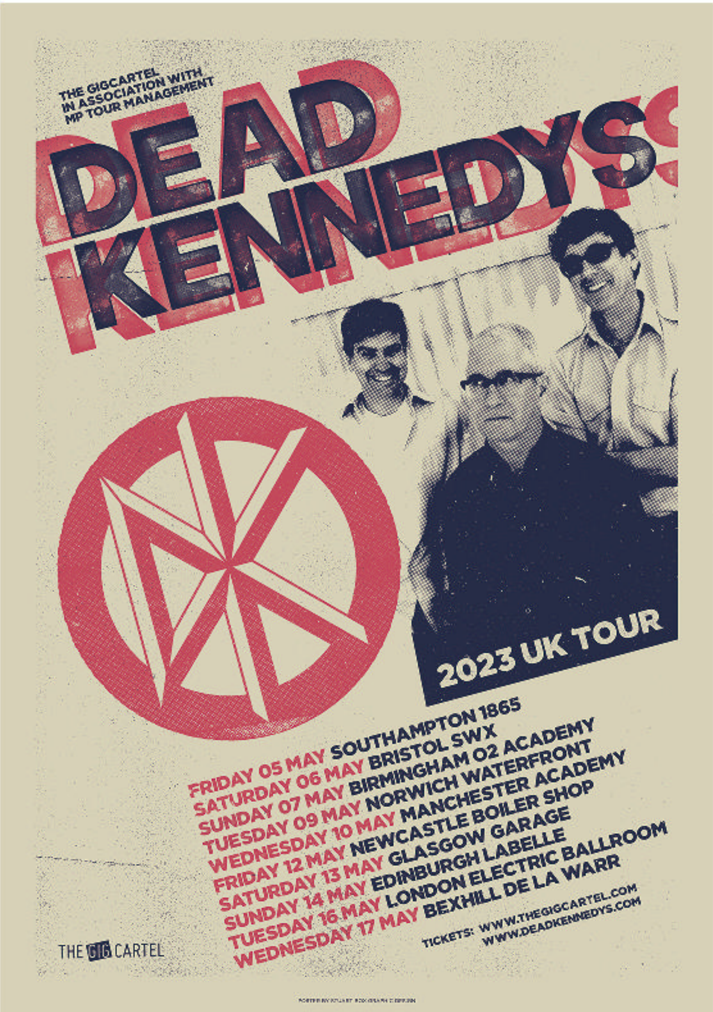

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TUESDAY 09 MAY NORWICH WATERFRONT
WEDNESDAY 10 MAY MANCHESTER ACADEMY
FRIDAY 12 MAY NEWCASTLE BOILER SHOP
SATURDAY 13 MAY GLASGOW GARAGE
SUNDAY 14 MAY EDINBURGH LABELLE
TUESDAY 16 MAY LONDON ELECTRIC BALLROOM
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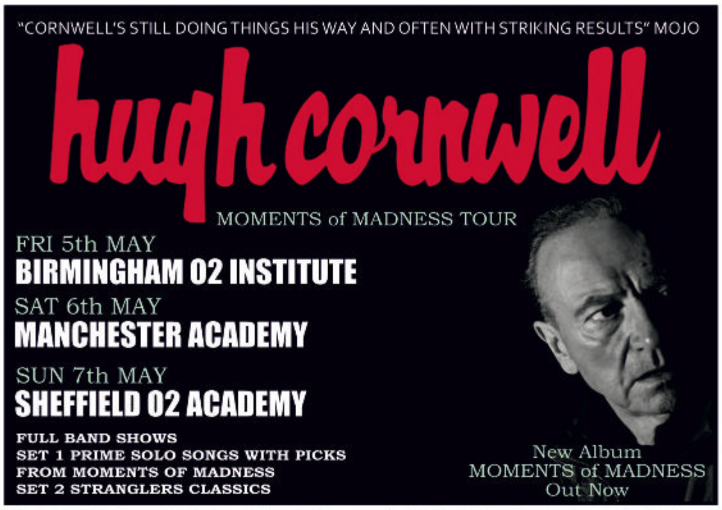

"CORNWELL'S STILL DOING THINGS HIS WAY AND OFTEN WITH STRIKING RESULTS" MOJO

hugh cornwell

MOMENTS of MADNESS TOUR

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SAT 6th MAY
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MOMENTS of MADNESS
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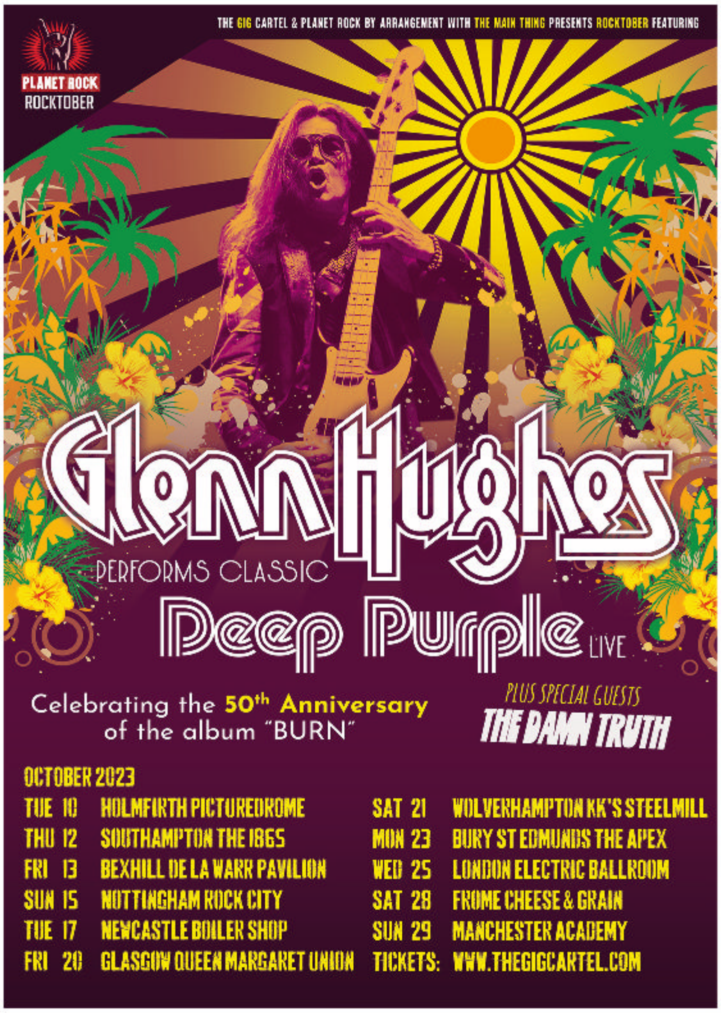

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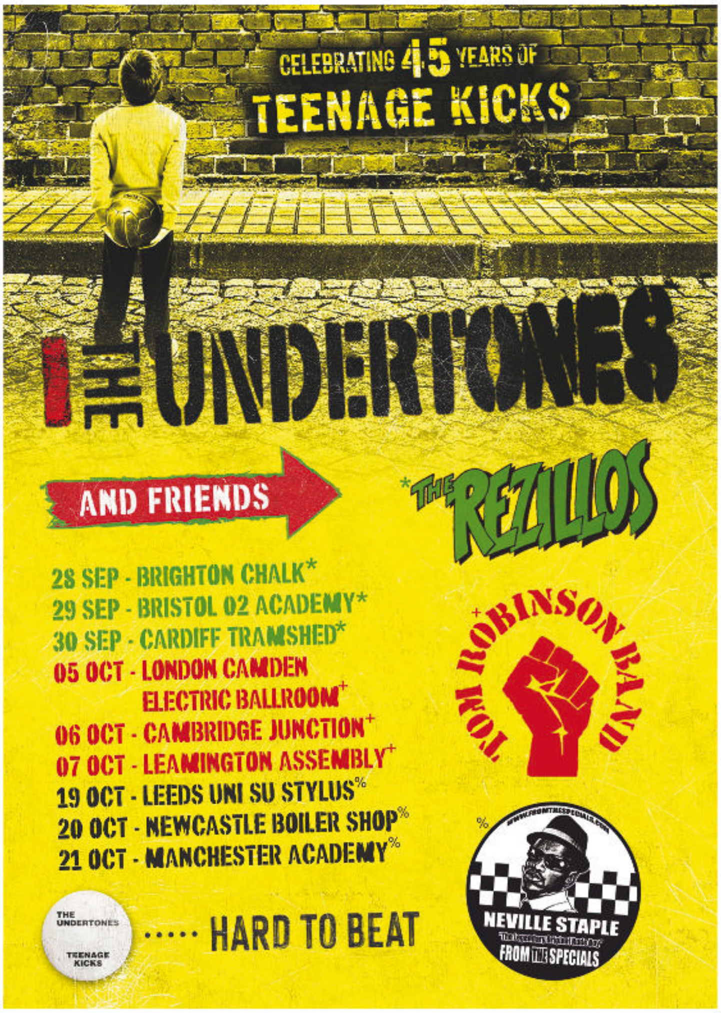
FRI 13 BEXHILL DE LA WARR PAVILION
SUN 15 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY
TUE 17 NEWCASTLE BOILER SHOP
FRI 20 GLASGOW QUEEN MARGARET UNION
SAT 21 WOLVERHAMPTON KK'S STEELMILL
MON 23 BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX
WED 25 LONDON ELECTRIC BALLROOM
SAT 28 FROME CHEESE & GRAIN
SUN 29 MANCHESTER ACADEMY
TICKETS: WWW.THEGIGCARTEL.COM



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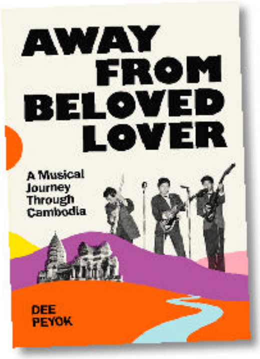
19 OCT - LEEDS UNI SU STYLUS%
20 OCT - NEWCASTLE BOILER SHOP%
21 OCT - MANCHESTER ACADEMY%

THE UNDERTONES TEENAGE KICKS ..... HARD TO BEAT



Away From Beloved Lover: A Musical Journey Through Cambodia

★★★★

Dee Peyok

GRANTA. £16.99

First they came for the pop stars… exemplary archaeological dig into a scene the world forgot.

Obsessed, 40 years after the event, by singer Sinn Sisamouth's interpretation of A Whiter Shade Of Pale, Peyok spent a decade hunting for the golden age of Cambodian pop, which began with The Twist and ended with the Killing Fields. As most of the country's artists were murdered between 1975 and 1979, and their music lost, the author could hardly have chosen a harder subject, yet her book adds to the visuals provided by the film Don't Think I've Forgotten. Peyok's knowledge of music is impressive – you have to admire someone who can argue that Thavary My Love is worthy of *Sketches Of Spain*; or that Baksey Cham Krong have "a Ronny & The Daytonas ballad vibe". Hopefully there will be an ever-growing Spotify playlist, because now I want to hear Sisamouth's Khmer Republic-era hit The King Sold The Land To The Viet Cong.

David Hutcheon

I'm Into Something Good: My Life Managing 10cc, Herman's Hermits & Many More!

★★★★

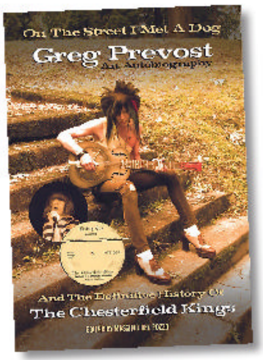
Harvey Lisberg with Charlie Thomas

OMNIBUS PRESS. £20

Rock manager's memoir with added tales of snooker-player excess.

Mancunian entrepreneur Harvey Lisberg wrote the B-side to Herman's Hermits' 1964 hit I'm Into Something Good, made £15,000 and bought his parents a nice house. "But my songs were crap," he said. Instead, Lisberg perfected the art of enabling artists to be artistic while he took care of everything else. His account of the Hermits' 1967 US tour with The Who is delivered with humour and an air of world-weariness, especially when Keith Moon blows up a hotel toilet in Montgomery, Alabama: "To me, he was an insane maniac." But managing four brilliant artists in one band, 10cc, almost does for him. Lisberg takes on snooker's enfant terribles Jimmy White and Alex 'Hurricane' Higgins instead, and finds himself driving down a closed snowbound M62 with Higgins in desperate search of a nightcap. "I never thought I would live past 70," admits the 82-year-old. But Lisberg's is a life well lived.

Mark Blake


On The Street I Met A Dog
Greg Prevost
An Autobiography
And The Definitive History Of The Chesterfield Kings

On The Street I Met A Dog: An Autobiography And The Definitive History Of The Chesterfield Kings

★★★★

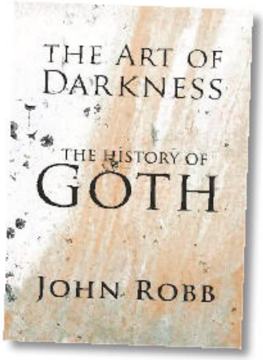
Greg Prevost

MISTY LANE BOOKS. £26

Engaging tales from the '80s underground and beyond.

Greg Prevost wrote Future fanzine and currently makes solo records, but he is best known for being the founder and lead singer of The Chesterfield Kings, the Rochester, New York outfit that kickstarted the '80s garage punk revival and put out the cult favourite *Here Are The Chesterfield Kings* in 1982. Much of Prevost's memoir is given over to the 33 years he put into the band, and his meticulously detailed reminiscences are often lifted straight from his spiral bound notebook diaries. Reprints of posters, tickets, handbills and numerous previously unseen photos provide a lucid evocation of the US children-of-*Nuggets* scene. An avid record collector, Prevost writes with a fan's love and conviction, his stories of tour-van life come peppered with cameos including Ray Davies, Johnny Thunders and Gene Clark.

Lois Wilson



The Art Of Darkness – The History Of Goth

★★★★

John Robb

LOUDER THAN WAR BOOKS. £25

Book Of The Undead: inappropriately lively overview of the Batcave and beyond.

Few music books begin in 410AD, but John Robb's exhaustive survey of goth goes right back to its dyed black roots with Alaric and the Visigoths' attack on Rome. Goth has become such an adaptable something-for-everyone aesthetic, you can feel similarly over-run – this is a book that includes both Whitehouse's nasty transgressions and All About Eve's "patchouli whiff" – but Robb does an excellent job of stuffing so many dark entries into his gloomy encyclopaedia. Hitting the main roosts – London, Leeds, Berlin – he also detours into Slovenian mining town Trbovlje (home of Laibach) and Los Angeles (Christian Death). Extensive interviews re-animate the story, Sex Gang Children and Fields Of The Nephilim getting a moment in the slimelight along with Bauhaus and The Sisters Of Mercy. At times, it would be easier to catalogue things not goth-adjacent – "mainstream pop loves a goth dabble," says Robb – but this history deftly shows why the dark side is never dead and buried.

Victoria Segal

Happy Trails: Andrew Lauder's Charmed Life And High Times In The Record Business

★★★★

Andrew Lauder and Mick Houghton

WHITE RABBIT. £22

Music biz memoir from one of the good guys.

Like Hollywood, the record industry is now but a shadow of its old self, and though we focus on its monsters, far more common are the nerds. No mere music lovers, they (and maybe we) obsess about the records themselves, labels, chart positions, back office personnel and relationships – the entire ecology that supports the spectacular songbirds and big beasts. Blues and San Francisco acid-rock fan Andrew Lauder is one such, co-founder of the labels Radar, F-Beat, Demon and Silvertone after over a decade in United Artists' corporate trenches backing such unlikely nags as Can, Hawkwind, Dr. Feelgood and The Stranglers, as well as fading memories like The Groundhogs and Man. Though characteristically over-discreet, his fascinating inside track on what went wrong with The Stone Roses exemplifies the collision of enthusiasm, licensed creativity, sharp practice and turf wars that made the music biz so much more than another office job.

Mat Snow

Dance Your Way Home: A Journey Through The Dancefloor

★★★★

Emma Warren

FABER. £16.99

Swirling survey of how dancing shapes culture and community, from the rock gig to the rave.

"If you dance, you're a dancer. This is where we begin." Instantly ripping away our self-consciousness, journalist Emma Warren is an energetic, thoughtful guide to how dance shapes personal and collective experiences of music. Her book is both a personal odyssey (skipping from a childhood twirling in front of Top Of The Pops to acid house and dubstep clubs shuddering with sub-bass) and a fascinating historical survey of dance as rebellion and resistance (from Irish bishops trying to close dances in the 1930s to the rise of reggae and lovers rock clubs against National Front-fuelled racism in the 1970s and 1980s). Filling her book with nuanced research, Warren also writes purposefully about the liberating energy of the dancefloor, and how it can create new communities. "Dance is about release," she notes, "but it is also about solidarity with others, and within ourselves."

Jude Rogers

Khmer feel the noise: Baksey Cham Krong, Cambodia's first rock band.

Argot Pictures

Academy Events present

SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY ★★ AND THE ★★ ASBURY Jukes

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PHOTO BY DANNY CLINCH

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BIRMINGHAM
O_2 INSTITUTE

TUE 11 JULY
BOURNEMOUTH
O_2 ACADEMY

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15 **BRISTOL** O_2 Academy
16 **MANCHESTER** O_2 Ritz
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77 - 83

30TH SEP
LEEDS
O_2 ACADEMY

1ST OCT
EDINBURGH
O_2 ACADEMY

2ND OCT
NEWCASTLE
BOILER SHOP

4TH OCT
MANCHESTER
O_2 RITZ

5TH OCT
BIRMINGHAM
O_2 INSTITUTE

6TH OCT
LONDON
O_2 SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE

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BRISTOL
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(THE DAMNED!) (FROM THE SPECIALS!) LAST TOURING YEAR

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28 **MANCHESTER** Bread Shed
29 **LIVERPOOL** O_2 Academy2
30 **SHEFFIELD** O_2 Academy2
31 **BIRMINGHAM** O_2 Institute2

NOVEMBER
02 **BRISTOL** The Fleece
03 **OXFORD** O_2 Academy2
04 **LONDON**
O_2 Academy Islington

An Academy Events, CLUB.THE.MAMMOTH.
& Star Shaped presentation
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TICKETMASTER.CO.UK

From Brooklyn 1936 to Central Park 1973
Carole King
Home Again

Carole King

★★★★

Home Again: Live In Central Park

THE CODA COLLECTION. DL/ST

King at her live peak in May 1973. Also available as a digital live album.

This multi-format set begins with a highly watchable mini-doc that, through archive footage and new interviews, maps Carole King's genius from Brill Building-era songwriter who created such classics as Will You Love Me Tomorrow to chart-topping singer-songwriter. The rest is given over to her May '73 concert, which filmed by her producer Lou Adler, captures her at the piano and accompanied by an 11-piece group in New York's Central Park. Despite the estimated 100,000-strong crowd, including Jack Nicholson and Joni Mitchell, her performance feels remarkably intimate, more like a club show, with a completely natural King dispelling her butterflies quickly, delivering songs from *Tapestry* and her then soon-to-be released *Fantasy* with magnetism and unnerving emotion. It was forecast to rain, she tells us, but the sun shines bright. As does King throughout.

Lois Wilson

Van Der Graaf Generator

★★★

The Bath Forum Concert

CHERRY RED. CD/BR/DVD

Live in 2022, 150 minutes of the prog warriors.

Over The Hill, the peak of VdGG's third coming, says it all: "We're strapped in and we're gunning for the roller-coaster ride…." Fifty five years after forming, their first self-directed live film is shot largely in severe, almost masochistic close-up, and leaves in occasional mistakes. But fans will know every hairpin bend, stentorian mood swing and metaphorical utterance of Man-Erg, La Rossa and Childlike Faith In Childhood's End from the earlier 'quartet' years; perhaps less so the later – but no less knotted and careering – likes of Interference Patterns, Go and Alfa Berlina. There's also room for two "rediscovered" (says Peter Hammill) live tracks, both absolute classics: House With No Door and, from Hammill's solo CV, the labyrinthine A Louse Is Not A Home. If this turns out to be VdGG's last stand – two months after this March 2022 show, Hammill had emergency surgery – it's a triumphant epitaph.

Martin Aston

Energy: A Documentary About Damo Suzuki

★★★

Dir: Michelle Heighway

I4 VISUALS/INDEPENDENT 2022. ST

Inspirational story of the ex-Can vocalist's survival and creative drive.

In 2014 Damo Suzuki was diagnosed with his second bout of cancer – he had been seriously ill in the 1980s – with only a 10 per cent chance of survival, and Energy… follows him through five years of surgery and recovery. He says, "music is healing" and "energy is the source of a human being", and although still in pain he tentatively resumed his 'Never Ending Tour' – of improvisational shows, each with a different line-up at each venue – which had been temporarily halted after 20 years, partly to tap into that energy. His partner Elke says it's a "miracle" he survived, and Suzuki talks candidly about being an "outsider" as a youth in Japan, his time with Can and his faith in God. It's a fascinating, moving film for the aficionado, but would need more detailed contextualisation to give it wider appeal. "There is only one way, always forward," says Suzuki, and his extraordinary journey continues.

Mike Barnes

If These Walls Could Sing

★★★

Dir: Mary McCartney

DISNEY+. ST

The toddler who lived round the corner celebrates the Rolls-Royce of recording studios, Abbey Road.

When this handsome converted London townhouse opened in 1931 it was the biggest recording studio in the world, owned by the newly conglomerated biggest record company in the world, EMI. From Elgar recording Pomp And Circumstance, documentary-maker Mary McCartney skips nearly three decades of unprofitable classical to alight at the moment George Martin is hired to make some money with pop. Cliff Richard's terrific Move It is the aperitif for the main event, Dad and his old mucker Ringo in Fab mode. For many of us this story never gets old, and Paul remains an illuminating raconteur. We also get valuable insights and yarns from superstar talking heads Elton, Jimmy Page, Shirley Bassey, all three surviving Floyds, both Gallaghers, Nile Rodgers, and, saving the studio when even EMI acts decamped to cheaper rival facilities, Hollywood's John Williams and George Lucas.

Mat Snow

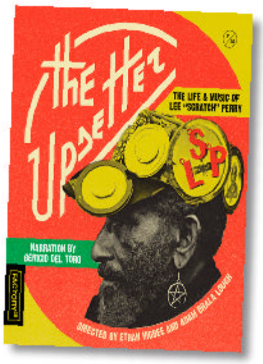
The Upsetter: The Life & Music Of Lee 'Scratch' Perry

★★★

Dir: Ethan Higbee & Adam Bhala Lough

CRITERION. BR/DVD

Previously thought destroyed in a house fire, this long-lost curio sees the light of day again.


The Upsetter
The Life & Music of Lee "Scratch" Perry
Narration by Benicio Del Toro
Directed by Ethan Higbee and Adam Bhala Lough

Centred around a 2004 interview in Switzerland with the late Jamaican producer, secured after Perry was presented with $5,000 in a paper bag, and further financed by an Argentinian trucking company, this 2011 documentary is as bizarre, abstract and fitfully brilliant as the man himself. Narrated by a dreamy Benicio Del Toro and utilising a bricolage of historical footage seemingly sourced from water-damaged VHS cassettes, this fuzzy, frustrating and meandering film still gets closer to the heart of Perry's uniquely eccentric vision than other more orthodox films. In fact, by eschewing talking heads, and focusing solely on Perry's own almost metaphysical version of autobiography, the film gradually evolves from art-punk curio to an essential document of reggae history, telling Perry's tale of creative rise and fall and spiritual rebirth with dizzying psychedelic accuracy. As Perry himself puts it, "This is my movie and this is the truth." Just be sure to take your migraine pills before watching.

Andrew Male

Dreaming Walls: Inside The Chelsea Hotel

★★★

Dir: Amélie van Elmbt & Maya Duverdier

DOGWOOF. C/ST

As Manhattan's fabled vertical bohemia renovates upmarket, its ghosts haunt on.

Kicking off this documentary on the Chelsea Hotel, a young Patti Smith, who went to live there in imitation of Dylan Thomas, put her finger on this shabby chic bolthole's appeal: "I've always liked to be where the big guys were." What follows delivers big guys – Marilyn, Burroughs, Warhol, Nico and the Factory crowd, Sid and Nancy, but no Leonard and Janis – in only ghostly glimpses. None perhaps remain, so instead we have the little guys: construction workers ripping out the old towards a chi-chi future, the resident managers (by no means corporate slickers) who buy into that future, and elderly 'holdouts' like choreographer Merle Lister fighting rearguard so they may commune a little longer with the spirit – and spirits – of the place. Moody rather than meaty, this almost Tarkovskyian elegy is suggestive but slight.

Mat Snow

Future days: Damo Suzuki keeps the energy moving forward in Can, circa 1973.

Image courtesy of Mol Kamach

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What he did ain't make-believe: De La Soul's David Jolicoeur, AKA hip-hop revolutionary Trugoy The Dove.

Joe Dilworth

The Chosen One To Speak

De La Soul rapper **David Jude Jolicoeur**, AKA Trugoy The Dove, left us on February 12.

IN 1989, DAVID JOLICOEUR took the opening lines of De La Soul's first hit, Me Myself And I: "Mirror mirror on the wall/Tell me mirror, what is wrong?" he rapped coolly, riffing on a fairy tale over a body-moving Parliament sample. Hip-hop had never heard anything like it.

Born in Brooklyn to Haitian-American parents, the rapper known variously as Trugoy the Dove, Plug Two and Dave grew up in suburban Long Island, from where he monitored the New York hip-hop scene alongside partners Posdnuos (Kelvin Mercer) and DJ Maseo (Vincent Mason). The three Amityville Memorial High School students revelled in subverting norms as they developed their eclectic sound at the local Dugout club, picking up steam when their 4-track demo of Plug Tunin' caught the ear of Stetsasonic DJ Prince Paul. Paul's anything-goes production style was critical as De La Soul laid down their debut *3 Feet High And Rising* for a shoestring $25,000, filled with samples liberated from their parents' record collections.

A high-concept, cerebral coming-of-age turn, the album exploded rap's stylistic vocabulary in an instant and broke through to a vast student audience. While its posse cut Buddy helped launch like-minded collective Native Tongues (with The Jungle Brothers, A Tribe Called Quest, Monie Love), Jolicoeur was unprepared for the scale of their success, telling NME he intended to resume his architecture studies. "I know this ain't going to last forever, so I want to have something to fall back on." That never happened, but De La worked hard to debunk their perception as hip-hop hippies, with salty responses to fame's dark side on *3 Feet High*'s sequel, 1991's *De La Soul Is Dead*.

One of the few hip-hop groups to age gracefully, they eschewed hits for consistently creative long-players: tackling gardening, ecology and male sexual anxiety on 1993's *Buhloone Mindstate* and casting a withering eye over their rap counterparts on 1996's *Stakes Is High*. Jolicoeur's solo turn on Itzsoweezee (Hot) featured some of his most incisive lines, as he took shots at the rising tide of Mafioso rap via a popular soda brand: "The only Italians you knew was Icees."

Away from solo turns for Adam F and Handsome Boy Modeling School, Jolicoeur rarely strayed from the fold, but was instrumental in writing Gorillaz' 2005 hit Feel Good Inc. with Damon Albarn, who shared a piano loop and a tribute on Twitter on February 13. The long-running legal issues that prevented his group releasing its music digitally were finally resolved when De La Soul played the Grammys on February 5, albeit without him. Jolicoeur lost his long battle with congestive heart failure the following week.

A big man with a gentle soul, his bandmates paid tribute to their friend on social media. Posdnuos described him as "the heart of our group", while Maseo revealed they had "thoroughly discussed" mortality before he passed: "I remember your mom calling you Dove, so you've always had wings, so go on and fly into the light."

Andy Cowan

> "Dave, you were the heart of our group."
> POSDNUOS

THE LEGACY

The Album: De La Soul – *3 Feet High And Rising* (Tommy Boy, 1989)

The Sound: The first truly psychedelic hip-hop album was an hour-plus of unlikely yet irresistible hooks. As the group revealed their oddball rhyme personas and offbeat obsessions, its freewheeling sample-fest expertly corralled everything from Hall & Oates and Steely Dan to The Monkees and Liberace. Still sublime.

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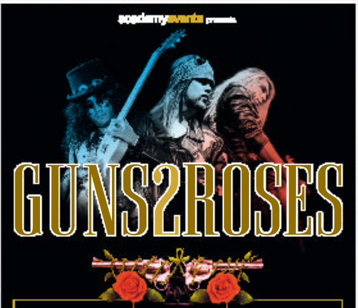

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Boogie in his bones: Huey 'Piano' Smith, soundtracking the Mardi Gras.

Huey 'Piano' Smith

Crescent City legend

BORN 1934

FROM JELLY ROLL Morton to Jon Batiste, New Orleans is a city that's never gone begging when it comes to keyboard talent. There just happens to be one – the reclusive and retiring Huey 'Piano' Smith – that the aforementioned players will routinely cite as their North Star of boogie-woogie, proto-rock'n'roll and Gulf Coast rhythm & blues weirdness. "Huey is a major part of the whole thing," Dr. John told Smith's biographer, Louisiana newspaperman John Wirt. Dr. John played on many of the same sessions at Cosimo Matassa's J&M Studio as legendary drummer Earl Palmer, who said, "Huey was the personification of New Orleans piano players."

Born in New Orleans, Smith, like his contemporary Fats Domino, watched R&B and boogie as it became rock'n'roll. More than that, he helped that happen, as a member of the pantheon who honed their talent at the Dew Drop Inn in Uptown New Orleans. His band, the Clowns, brought together the most wild and flamboyant members of that influential gang: Bobby Marchan, the young James Booker, Guitar Slim, Earl King, and singer Gerri Hall all fronted or filled in for the raw boogie pianist who preferred to hang back, pounding out the notes with a heavy left hand. Rockin' Pneumonia And The Boogie Woogie Flu and Sea Cruise, which hit the Top 20 sung by white New Orleanian vocalist Frankie Ford in 1959, are probably Smith's most famous cuts; more eccentric songs, like Don't You Just Know It and Don't You Know Yockomo, with raucous call-and-response group vocals that sound like some wild South Louisiana party, still soundtrack the Mardi Gras season.

A Jehovah's Witness who had forgone secular music for 40 years, Smith left this earth aged 89 on February 13. New Orleans sang along with him, and always will.

Alison Fensterstock

THEY ALSO SERVED

SINGER **LILLIAN WALKER-MOSS** (below, b.1945) was co-founder of Leiber & Stoller hitmakers **The Exciters**, best known for their January '63 US Number 4 single Tell Him, whose street-smart style paved the way for the likes of The Ronettes and The Shangri-Las. The band opened for The Beatles on their 1964 US tour, but had no more hits.

BASSIST **BRUCE BARTHOL** (b.1947) was a member of **Country Joe & The Fish** from 1965 to 1968, and played on their anti-Vietnam broadside I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die Rag. He later played with **Formerly Fat Harry** and **Energy Crisis**, was musical director for the **San Francisco Mime Troupe**, and took part in reunions.

GAINSBOURG ARRANGER **ALAIN GORAGUER** (b.1931) first came to notice as a jazz pianist, working with writer-musician **Boris Vian**. He later wrote and arranged music for the likes of **Nana Mouskouri**, **Jean Ferrat** and **Serge Gainsbourg**, and conducted the latter's 1965 France Gall-sung Eurovision winner Poupée De Cire, Poupée De Son. His other credits include novelty single Sexy Dracula, blue movie soundtracks, and the much-sampled score for the 1973 film La Planète Sauvage.

MEMPHIS SOUL SINGER **SPENCER WIGGINS** (b.1945) cut deep soul for the Goldwax and FAME labels, including I Never Loved A Woman (The Way I Love You) with **Duane Allman** on guitar. In 1973 he left secular music to sing gospel in Miami. In 2013 he and his singing brother Percy joined **The Bo-Keys** for a cover of Chips Moman and Dan Penn's Dark End Of The Street.

SONGWRITER **RON ALTBACH** (b.1946) was a member of Franco-American rockers **King Harvest**, and played organ on Dancing In The Moonlight, the 1972 hit later covered by Toploader which was inspired by a near-fatal mugging in the US Virgin Islands. He later contributed to **The Beach Boys**' *M.I.U* and *L.A. (Light Album)* LPs, **Dennis Wilson**'s *Pacific Ocean Blue* and **Mike Love**'s *Celebration*.

BASSIST **CONNIE 'GUYBO' SMITH** (b.1939) met **Eddie Cochran** in junior high school in California, playing on rock'n'roll classics C'mon Everybody, Twenty Flight Rock and Summertime Blues, and Cochran's sole LP released in his lifetime, *Singin' To My Baby* (Eddie paid tribute with The Kelly Four's 1959 instrumental Guybo, on which the bassist appeared). Smith also played with rockabilly talents **Lee Denson** and **Glen Glenn**.

MANCHESTER BLUESMAN **VICTOR BROX** (below, b.1941) played with the **Aynsley Dunbar Retaliation** from 1968 to 1970, the year he portrayed the high priest Caiaphas on the original recording of Jesus Christ Superstar and his co-write Warning was covered by Black Sabbath. He also worked with **Graham Bond**, **Dr. John**, **Alexis Korner**, **Dick Heckstall-Smith** and many more, played with his own **Blues Train** band, and recorded with wife Annette and daughter Kyla.

R&B SINGER **CHUCK JACKSON** (b.1937) sang with Pittsburgh doo-woppers **The Del-Vikings** before going solo in 1957. His signature song was his 1962 US hit version of Burt Bacharach co-write Any Day Now; the same year's minor hit I Keep Forgettin' was later covered by David Bowie in 1984. Jackson also sang with **Dionne Warwick**, **Cissy Houston** and **Tammi Terrell**.

GUITARIST **STEFFEN BASHO-JUNGHANS** (b.1953) consciously aligned himself with his heroes when he adopted the name Basho in tribute to the Japanese poet and, more significantly, the avant-folk guitarist **Robbie Basho**. The East German released a series of low-key, engrossing albums from 1989 on, becoming prominent among a new generation of fingerpickers who built on the questing legacy of Basho and John Fahey – a virtuoso guitarist from behind the Berlin Wall, expanding the American Primitive tradition while making explicit the inadequacies of its name.

CARDIACS KEYBOARDIST/PERCUSSIONIST **TIM QUY** (b.1961) played punk-prog in Surrey's unquantifiable, myth-making cult eccentrics from 1980 to 1990. He appeared on releases including 1988's indie chart entry LP *A Little Man And A House And The Whole World Window* and the single Is This The Life, a UK Number 80 hit in 1988. Quy left in June 1990 after a filmed gig in Salisbury; released on VHS, a dedication to him was mistaken as the announcement of his death.

ORGANIST **DON SHINN** (b.1945) played with West Ham's **The Soul Agents**, who were produced by **Tony Hatch** and regularly played with a young **Rod Stewart**. Later he backed **Dusty Springfield** with **The Echoes**, played sessions for **James Taylor** and **Renaissance**, recorded solo, and formed bluesy jazzers **Dada**, who would evolve into **Vinegar Joe**.

BASSIST **PHIL SPALDING** (b.1957) played with **Bernie Tormé**, **Original Mirrors** and **Toyah** before joining **Steve Hackett** and **Steve Howe** in supergroup **GTR**. His other credits included **The Who**, **Ray Charles** and **Mick Jagger**; he also played on **Mike Oldfield**'s Moonlight Shadow and **Right Said Fred**'s I'm Too Sexy.

IMPOSING PARISIEN ROCK notable **FRANÇOIS HADJI-LAZARO** (left, b.1956) mixed punk, ska, folk, country, chanson and more in **Les Garçons Bouchers**, **Los Carayos** and **Pigalle**, while his Boucherie Productions label released early recordings by Manu Chao's band **Mano Negra**. He also acted, with credits including The City Of Lost Children, and made albums for young listeners.

Chris Catchpole, John Mulvey and Ian Harrison

Courtesy Kyla Brox, Dalle/Iconicpix, Getty (2)

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On the anti-war path: (clockwise) Dixie Chicks' Natalie Maines criticises President Bush; War Child's *Hope* comp; Radiohead's *Hail To The Thief* LP; Thom Yorke points the finger; a statue of Saddam Hussein is toppled over in Baghdad.

Faccus exceatu rep[illegible]busa qui cumquati [illegible]eptias est que dolum faces iscipid[illegible]aes dellor minctiur amus, omnimi[illegible] untectasint paruntis ut fugit minci[illegible]invel enest re dem exero cumquia esequiat.

APRIL 2003

...rock reacts to the Iraq War

APRIL 9 War had come to Iraq. After long-simmering allegations that the Arab republic ruled by Saddam Hussein had illegally amassed weapons of mass destruction, and were assisting Osama bin Laden's international terror group Al-Qaeda, a coalition which included America, the UK, Australia and Poland mounted a ground invasion on March 20. Today, the Iraqi capital Baghdad fell, the regime collapsed and a huge city centre statue of the dictator was toppled.

After huge anti-war demonstrations across the world in February, much global opinion was against the invasion. Inevitably, musicians took their stances. One of the most conspicuous was when Texan country trio Dixie Chicks – now The Chicks – played London's Shepherd's Bush Empire on March 10, and criticised bellicose US President George W. Bush. Said singer Natalie Maines, reported The Guardian, "We do not want this war, this violence, and we're ashamed the President of the United States is from Texas."

Coming from a band that played country music – a form often associated with God, homeland and other traditional values – this was potent stuff. The reaction was telling. The group's sales dropped off, country stations stopped playing them and in one Louisiana town, a 33,000-pound tractor was used to crush their CDs. On March 12, Maines released a statement saying, "I apologise to President Bush because my remark was disrespectful… I love my country. I am a proud American."

But the damage was done. Instead, the patriotic country faithful turned to songs like Darryl Worley's Have You Forgotten?, The Warren Brothers' Hey Mr President and, a song inspired by the 9/11 attacks, Toby Keith's Courtesy Of The Red, White And Blue (The Angry American). Keith called the Dixie Chicks "big-mouthed celebrities" and used, in concert, a Photoshopped image of the group with Saddam Hussein.

Elsewhere, reactions were more cautious. Acts including Tenacious D, Tom Petty and Matchbox 20 cancelled European shows and returned to the US. Madonna announced that she was withdrawing a graphic video juxtaposing high-fashion and warfare for her single American Life, and Detroit's Electric Six postponed their single Gay Bar to remove references to nuclear war. James Brown, meanwhile, donated 400 tickets for military personnel at a show in Houston.

Other voices had registered fiercer disquiet. Speaking at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland on March 10, Neil Young observed, "We're having fun tonight, but we're gonna start killing people next week… I feel like I'm in a great gas-guzzling SUV, driven by someone who's drunk as fuck." On March 15, the One Big No gig – again at Shepherd's Bush Empire – featured performances from Ian McCulloch, Chris Martin and Paul Weller, plus recorded messages from Yoko Ono, Cat Stevens and Elton John. The title of Radiohead's next LP *Hail To The Thief* – released in June but partially leaked at the end of March – was interpreted as a judgement on President Bush: on March 22 Thom Yorke had joined in a demonstration outside RAF Fairford where, reported NME, he said, "America is being run by a bunch of religious maniac bigots who stole their election and their only way of regaining power is to wage a war."

Other songs of the moment continued to pose urgent questions, such as R.E.M.'s Final Straw, Beastie Boys' In A World Gone Mad, DJ

> "We do not want this war, this violence."
> **NATALIE MAINES**

Getty (7), Alamy

Shadow and Zack de la Rocha's March Of Death, OutKast's re-popularised 2000 track B.O.B (Bombs Over Baghdad) and System Of A Down's Boom!, whose Michael Moore-directed video depicted Bush, UK PM Tony Blair, Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden riding cartoon missiles. There was, of course, music in the combat zone too. Jonathan Pieslak's 2009 book Sound Targets: American Soldiers And Music In The Iraq War (Indiana University Press) considered the listening tastes of American forces. Specialist Colby Buzzell, a machine gunner and blogger, told Pieslak, "Right about when we're about to go on a raid… I'd listen to Slayer to get all into it." Other music listened to by troops steeling their nerves included the themes to Rocky and The Good, The Bad And The Ugly, Go To Sleep by DMX, Eminem and Obie Trice, Metallica's Seek & Destroy and, oddly, an Alvin And The Chipmunks Christmas album.

There were also concrete attempts to assist. On April 29, the War Child charity released the *Hope* compilation to raise funds for the children of Iraq. Artists included David Bowie, George Michael and Paul McCartney, who commented, "I am delighted to be able to make this small contribution to a magnificent project."

On May 1 President Bush prematurely declared 'Mission Accomplished' from an aircraft carrier off the coast of California. In January 2004, the Bush administration admitted its pre-war justifications regarding chemical, biological and nuclear weapons were incorrect. US troops finally left Iraq in December 2011.

Ian Harrison

Trunk rockers: The White Stripes climb the charts.

Elephant Roars

APRIL 12 **The White Stripes' fourth album *Elephant* enters the UK charts at Number 1. It peaks at Number 6 in the US. The group begin a short UK tour with a sold-out show at the Wolverhampton Civic Hall on April 7 before returning to the US. On April 19, country veteran Loretta Lynn joins the group on-stage at the Hammerstein Ballroom in New York. "When Jack and Meg walked out on the stage," Lynn tells the Detroit Metro-Times, "it sounded like they had a big band up there. I just went into shock." "She's like a 21-year-old!" replies an admiring Jack White. "We are talking about working together." The White Stripes' next single, 7 Nation Army, charts at UK Number 7 on May 3.**

No spinning!: a Graham Coxon-less Blur (from left, Dave Rowntree, Damon Albarn and Alex James) have a re-think in 2003.

BLUR IN THE THINK THANK

APRIL 7 Blur play a secret gig at the Fritz Studios in Potsdam, Germany. The month also sees shows in Paris, Madrid, London, Mexico City, Los Angeles and the Coachella festival, building up to the release of their seventh LP, *Think Tank*, on May 5. Absent is guitarist Graham Coxon, who departed the group in 2002 and appears on just one *Think Tank* track, Battery In Your Leg. He plays his first major solo gig at the Stephen Malkmus-curated Down The Dustpipe night at the Royal Festival Hall on April 18. Asked by the Teletext news service about the LP, he calls it, "underdeveloped and tech-y" ,and says he'll go and see his old band, "if I don't have anything I'd rather do instead."

ALSO ON!

LUV STORY

5 Make Luv by Room 5 ft. Oliver Cheatham (above) is Number 1 in the UK. The vocal is adapted from Detroit singer Cheatham's 1983 classic Get Down Saturday Night. In 2004, Cheatham's biggest hit is adapted for Michael Gray's Number 7 hit The Weekend.

AT LAST, FUNK

9 Motown session alumni The Funk Brothers begin a headline tour at Boston's Avalon Ballroom, in time for the DVD release of the Standing In The Shadows Of Motown film. Guest vocalists include Joan Osborne, Darlene Love and Bootsy Collins.

WIND POWER

16 The film A Mighty Wind is released. Made by the same team behind 1984 metal mockumentary This Is Spinal Tap, it gives the same comic treatment to reuniting '60s folk singers.

GOODNIGHT NINA

21 Musical titan Nina Simone dies aged 70 at her home in southern France. This month we also lose soul singer Edwin Starr (April 2), songwriter Felice Bryant (April 22) and Motown choreographer Cholly Atkins (April 19).

IGGY BANKS

27 The Stooges – Iggy Pop, the Asheton brothers and bassist Mike Watt – re-form after 29 years and play the Coachella festival in southern California. "It fucking felt great," Pop later tells MOJO. "There's something about guys who went to the same high school."

TOP TEN

AUSTRALIA SINGLES APRIL 12

1 **ALL THE THINGS SHE SAID** T.A.T.U. INTERSCOPE
2 **LOST WITHOUT YOU** DELTA GOODREM EPIC
3 **NU FLOW** BIG BROVAZ EPIC
4 **IN DA CLUB** 50 CENT INTERSCOPE
5 **ALL I HAVE** JENNIFER LOPEZ FT. LL COOL J EPIC
6 **BUMP, BUMP, BUMP** B2K FT. P. DIDDY EPIC
7 **BIG YELLOW TAXI** COUNTING CROWS FT. VANESSA CARLTON GEFFEN
8 **YOU PROMISED ME (TU ES FOUTU)** IN-GRID TNS
9 **SING FOR THE MOMENT** EMINEM INTERSCOPE
10 **BEAUTIFUL** CHRISTINA AGUILERA RCA

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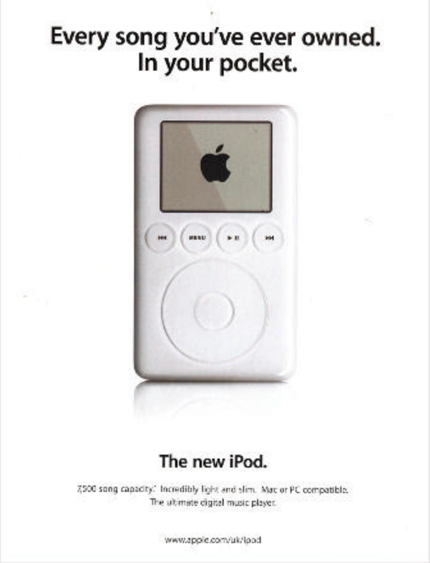
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GREAT
WHITE
WONDER

OK, intruders: (clockwise from above left) Specials fans enjoy themselves on-stage in 1980; Prince and Michael Jackson: rivals on the stage and on the ping-pong table; '69 Dylan boot Great White Wonder; Gizzard Puke.

Who invaded the stage?

Let us answer those tricky rock queries and illuminate the dusty corners of musical enquiry.

Re: MOJO 352. Reading Michael Portnoy (Bob Dylan's stage-sabotaging 'Soy Bomb' guy) and Jerry Dammers' thoughts on fans piling onto the stage in the glory days of The Specials begs the question – how long have fans been jumping on-stage and what are other good examples of the artform?

David Norris, via e-mail

MOJO says: The best people have hosted mass on-stage gatherings since rock'n'roll began, and despite MOJO office verdicts of "a weekly occurrence during grunge" and strange scenes at Flowered Up gigs, we'll keep these answers to spectacles you can actually watch online. There's 1966 footage of the Stones in Charlie Is My Darling and at London's Royal Albert Hall of marauding civilians getting too close to the band, with Brian Jones cackling with glee at the chaos. The Beatles played semi-live on Dutch VARA-TV in 1964 and enjoyed a full-on crowd surge for Can't Buy Me Love that left temporary drummer Jimmie Nicol alone on-stage at the end. There's also amateur footage of Elvis in '76 where he signs memorabilia and gives out scarves to some very good-natured trespassers as his band appear to play Green Onions. The Smiths at The Derby Assembly Rooms in 1983 shows another prime-quality stage encroachment, where the sheer weight of numbers makes it impossible for Morrissey to sing. A golden example has to be The Stooges at Glastonbury 2007, when serial crowd-inciter Iggy commands the mob to come on for Real Cool Time and salutes them as, "the world champion Glastonbury dancers." So, which stages did *you* invade?

MORE BOOTS

Re: the legality of bootlegs bought online (Ask MOJO 352). On the issue of bootlegs, to my knowledge there are several levels of permission required to legally record and distribute recordings. These are: to be allowed to make a recording in the first instance; permission to make any copies; agreement to distribute such copies; permission to adapt a recording for further use. To secure the appropriate rights, contact should be made with the artist, the writers, producer, publishers or any other rightsholders involved. Owning an illegal recording is a violation regardless of how and where you obtained it. Musicians with concerns should contact the MU for specific advice. And join us!

Keith Ames, the Musicians' Union, theMU.org

MOJO says: Thanks Keith. Wonder how those online retailers would react? (Good job we don't own any illegal recordings…) And thanks also to Greg Burge, who sent us a fascinating list of bootlegs offered for sale by the Notting Hill Virgin record shop in the '70s. "There were posters that we could pick up," he writes. "These usually advertised Virgin acts such as Kevin Coyne. Sometimes they just had a photo of Sumo wrestlers. On the other side of the poster was a list of LPs that were for sale." The list included such venerable boots as Great White Wonder, The Beatles Live At Shea and the Stones' Dark Horses, with the instruction "when you've read this, eat it."

WERE JACKO AND PRINCE RIVALS?

Michael Jackson collaborated with Diana Ross and Stevie Wonder, and Prince made records with Madonna and Kate Bush: why didn't they work together?

Kevin Lloyd, via e-mail

MOJO says: The two did share a stage in Hollywood in 1983 when a moonwalking Jackson was a guest of James Brown, and he suggested the Godfather Of Soul invite coming young talent Prince on stage. Prince was apparently displeased, feeling he had been ambushed and outperformed. On Quincy Jones' advice, Jackson wanted Prince to duet on 1987 single Bad, but was turned down (Prince later remarked to VH1 that he had reservations over who would sing the song's opening line, "Your butt is mine"). Though Prince was apparently deeply saddened by Jackson's death, the sense of rivalry is well illustrated by an anecdote shared by producer and engineer David Z. Imagine, if you can, these two musical giants playing ping-pong at Paisley Park: Prince was exultant that he not only beat Jackson but whacked the ball firmly into his groin area. Oww!

HELP MOJO

There was lots of incidental music used in the Not The 9 O'Clock News BBC comedy sketch show and for various Kenny Everett characters' intro music– eg, Gizzard Puke. I cannot find who these artists were anywhere. Can you help please?

Karl Scott, via e-mail

MOJO says: The '79-82 show's music was mainly by Peter Brewis and Howard Goodall, regular UK TV comedy songwriters in the '80s and '90s whose other credits, respectively, include recording The Wicker Man soundtrack with the group Magnet, and composing cues for Blackadder, Red Dwarf and more. Richard 'Four Weddings And A Funeral' Curtis was also involved in the writing. The theme tune was written by Nic Rowley, who contributed to albums by Kevin Ayers, Lindisfarne and RD Laing, while former Van der Graaf Generator man Chris Judge Smith wrote punk parody Gob On You.

CONTACT MOJO

Have you got a challenging musical question for the MOJO Brains Trust? E-mail **askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk** and we'll help untangle your trickiest puzzles.

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For more info, visit: lenco.uk

ANSWERS

MOJO 352

Across: 1 John Denver, 6 Feist, 10 Night Boat To Cairo, 12 Ecstasy, 13 Metal Magic, 16 God, 19 Chiaroscuro, 20 I.C.U., 21 Bovril, 22 Go, 24 Rock Power, 26 Trio, 27 Dolby, 28 Abyss, 31 Solo, 32 BBM, 33 Voom, 34 Hal, 36 Ogre, 38 Rez, 40 Nan, 42 Such A Small Love, 44 El Pea, 45 Large, 49 Ink, 50 As Right, 52 Rehearsal, 54 Plone, 55 Ital Dub, 56 Ti Amo, 58 So, 59 Orb, 60 Oriole, 62 Hag, 64 Guru, 66 Radar, 67 Cappadonna, 68 Andy Gill, 69 Edwin Hawkins.

Down: 1 Janet Jackson, 2 Higgs Boson Blues, 3 Dots, 4 Noose, 5 Extra, 7 Isi, 8 Tool, 9 Cosmic Traveler, 11 Argo, 12 Encores In Hi-Fi, 14 Troggs, 15 Clouds, 16 Gorillaz, 17 Delays, 18 Scream, 23 Tokoloshe, 25 RB, 29 YT, 30 Sugar, 34 He, 35 Maggot Brain, 36 Om, 37 RL, 38 Relapse, 39 Adele, 41 Nektar, 42 Spandau, 43 Caribou, 46 Arlo, 47 RSO, 48 Ganja, 51 Teasdale, 53 Poor Cow, 57 Pigpen, 61 Lhasa, 62 Hanoi, 63 Glass, 64 Goat, 65 Ride.

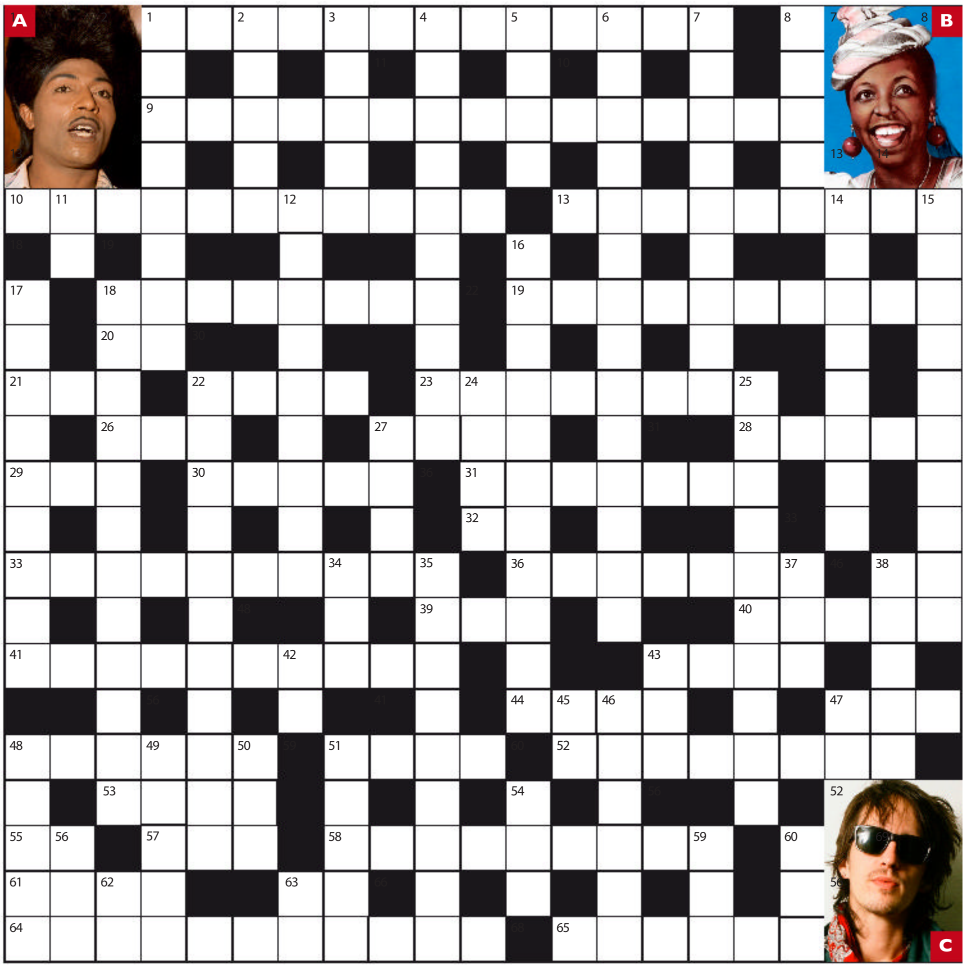
Winners: Robert Lindley of **Doncaster** and **Sabine Tuck** of **Portsmouth** win an EVO Start Recording bundle from Audient.

ACROSS

1 See photoclue A (6,7)
9 The Chemical Brothers take it back to the Motherland (2,5,2,6)
10 Jon Spencer Blues Explosion's roomy legwear (11)
13 Marillion do murder? (9)
18 A Holland-Dozier-Holland imprint (8)
19 The Dynamics express regret in '73 (4,1,5)
20 New York 'no wave' record label (2)
21 Happy Mondays' perpetually mobile maraca player (3)
22 Justice, Pigeon or Lady (4)
23 *Master And* --------, Bonnie 'Prince' Billy (8)
26 Who do right, Can? (3)
27 Madrugada, in granular mood in 2002 (4)
28 The Killer Queen's weapon of choice (5)
29 Paul, Claypool or Baxter (3)
30 Stevie Nicks' wandering song (5)
31 A bit of bother for Ray LaMontagne in '04 (7)
32 Histoire De Filles go French house in '90 (2)
33 John Barry's Bond motif 007 – what was JB flying when it played over a volcano? (10)
36 Willie Nelson was tougher than this (7)
38 Kanye West's 2018 LP (2)
39 They owned Harvest, Capitol and Parlophone (1,1,1)
40 Not on your life, said House Of Love (5)
41 "The ------ ----/Vulturous in the aftermath" (The Fall) (6,4)
43 Film music great Nino (4)
44 GWAR, Albert Collins and Manuel Göttsching all recorded live albums here (4)
47 Radiohead's wind (3)
48 Ivy, Arrow or Idea (6)
51 B.A.D. sang about this label in '85 (4)
52 David Gedge's other band (8)
53 Foxy Brown's was Ill (2,2)
55 Eminent label of the Basque country (2)
57 Bury St Edmunds reissue imprint (1,1,1)
58 Wally Tax's Amsterdam garage band (9)
61 Hype Williams' couture EP (4)
63 In short, the Velvets (2)
64 See photoclue B (5,6)
65 The Sonics, unstable in '65 (6)

DOWN

1 One half of The Caravelles, she did spoken-word LPs for Disney (4,4)
2 Sade's was the sweetest (5)
3 African rappers Zimbabwe ----- (5)
4 Groundhogs' Master of Ceremonies on *Hogwash*? (10)
5 AKA headphones (4)
6 Louis Jordan's speed advice in Run Joe (2,4,2,3,3)
7 The Beach Boys '68 UK Number 1 (2,2,5)
8 The Mood Mosaic's A Touch Of Velvet, A Sting Of ----- (5)
11 Label which leased out Roxy, ELP, Crimson (1,1)
12 AKA Kraftwerk's *Electric Café* (6,3)
14 Doris Duke's sorry self-assessment (3,1,5)
15 CCR's viridescent stretch of water (5,5)
16 All-star benefit for Victoria Williams (5,6)
17 Mark Lanegan chews it over in '04 (9)
18 See photoclue C (4,8)
22 Supertramp's rational hit, The ------- ---- (7,4)
24 Well-travelled blues guitarist Rick ---- (4)
25 Wah Wah Watson's trip to Baker St? (10)
27 The Utopia Strong, live in '21 (4)
34 Pugwash's was flavoured with almonds (3)
35 Tony Levin's reverberating 2006 LP (9)
37 Chris ---, driver on *The Road To Hell* (3)
38 N.W.A rapper (5)
42 Sandie Shaw gets personal in '65 (2)
43 Bis's Manda (3)
45 -- *YMO*, Sakamoto's 2003 comp (2)
46 Dandy Livingstone's dancing side-project (6)
47 Cedric Brooks's nickname (2)
48 Robert Palmer in '83, before a fall? (5)
49 Dance done by Love Sculpture, UK Subs and Winifred Atwell (5)
50 Her 2018 LP *Saturn* was a Mercury contender (3)
51 Tears For Fears' first US Number 1 (5)
54 The Virgin Suicides soundtrackers (3)
56 Skids' song in need of Clearasil (3)
59 AKA Saïan Supa Crew
60 Studios where Richie Havens recorded *Stonehenge* (3)
63 Who's on the compilation LP? (1,1)



Getty (3)

A question of Spurt: Richard Hell & The Voidoids (from right) Hell, Robert Quine, Ivan Julian and Marc Bell, 1977.

Ivan Julian and Richard Hell & The Voidoids

The Blank Generation was declared at CBGB in NY, but all crumbled when the lustre wore off.

HELLO EARLY 1976

I'd been in Yugoslavia, touring with The Foundations opening for this band The YU Group. Our gigs were pretty cookie-cutter, do-the-hits. I was 20 years old and I wanted to write some songs. I did my last gig with them in Skopje [now capital of North Macedonia] and went to New York. I put an ad in Musicians Classified, which was kind of like a Village Voice for musicians. When it came out Richard [Hell] was on the cover.

Robert Quine [Voidoids guitarist] contacted me and I went to the audition at Daily Planet studios on West 30th Street, which was a premier place for bands to rehearse. I didn't really know who Richard was, I'd heard about CBGB, vaguely, this place where people were playing their original music. Quine was the one that pretty much conducted the audition while Richard just kind of sat and watched on. I thought that Quine was Richard because I'd only seen a picture of Richard once. They were both wearing dark-pink shaded glasses.

I liked what I heard. They had, like, two and a half songs at the time. You Gotta Lose was basically a Chuck Berry-type song, but when I heard Richard's bass line, I went, "There's something going on here! Not sure if I understand it, but there is." Blank Generation was another song Richard had. That's how it started. We rehearsed three or four songs for the next two or three months, getting ready for an EP. Maybe being new to New York, I was a bit naïve. I thought, Maybe that's just how they do it here.

Quine and I were both huge music fans, and we were friends right up until the end for him [Quine died in 2004]. I thought it was amazing that Richard would leap around and play bass and sing at the same time. Then again, there were moments when he would do really crazy, counterproductive things, like throwing his bass at this giant bouncer when we played in Derby [supporting The Clash in winter '77]. The guy came backstage and I had to calm him down.

GOODBYE SPRING 1979

The Clash tour was much more tumultuous than when we were opening for Elvis Costello [Dec '78- Jan '79]. [Costello manager] Jake Riviera put us up on this houseboat on Cheyne Walk. At low tide, it would tilt over 45 degrees. Richard and Bob could not get along in this boat. It was like being in a dysfunctional family where you try to go to sleep and your mother and father are fighting violently in the other room. I tried to tell the guys, "You don't know how well you have it here, try to behave." But they couldn't.

It was still good, but Richard had problems at the time, drug problems, and didn't really enjoy anything about the music industry. By the end we were playing once every month and a half, we'd been dropped from Sire, CBGB had lost its lustre, if that's how you can describe it. The whole thing just kind of crumbled.

I think I talked to Robert first, then I called Richard on the phone and went over to the East Village and talked to him. I said, "Richard, I can't do this any more." He was fine with it, totally resigned with the situation. He realised his state and he wasn't excited about keeping the band going anyway. Leaving, I felt relieved. It was a bit frightening as well – I remember walking up Second Avenue, thinking, Now what are you going to do? I formed a band called The Outsets. I was an impatient 23-year-old, it was pretty quick.

The popular music group is a very intense, emotional, intimate relationship that you know probably won't last for more than five years. When we did Oh [2000 reunion track] we hadn't been in the same room in 20 years, but it was actually fun. Me and Bob remained close friends, as Richard and I do. Richard was very much responsible for the benefit they had for me when I was really ill [Hell headed an all-star bill to raise funds for Julian's cancer treatment in 2016]. I tell people, rather than a friend, he's more like a brother to me, with all the pros and cons.

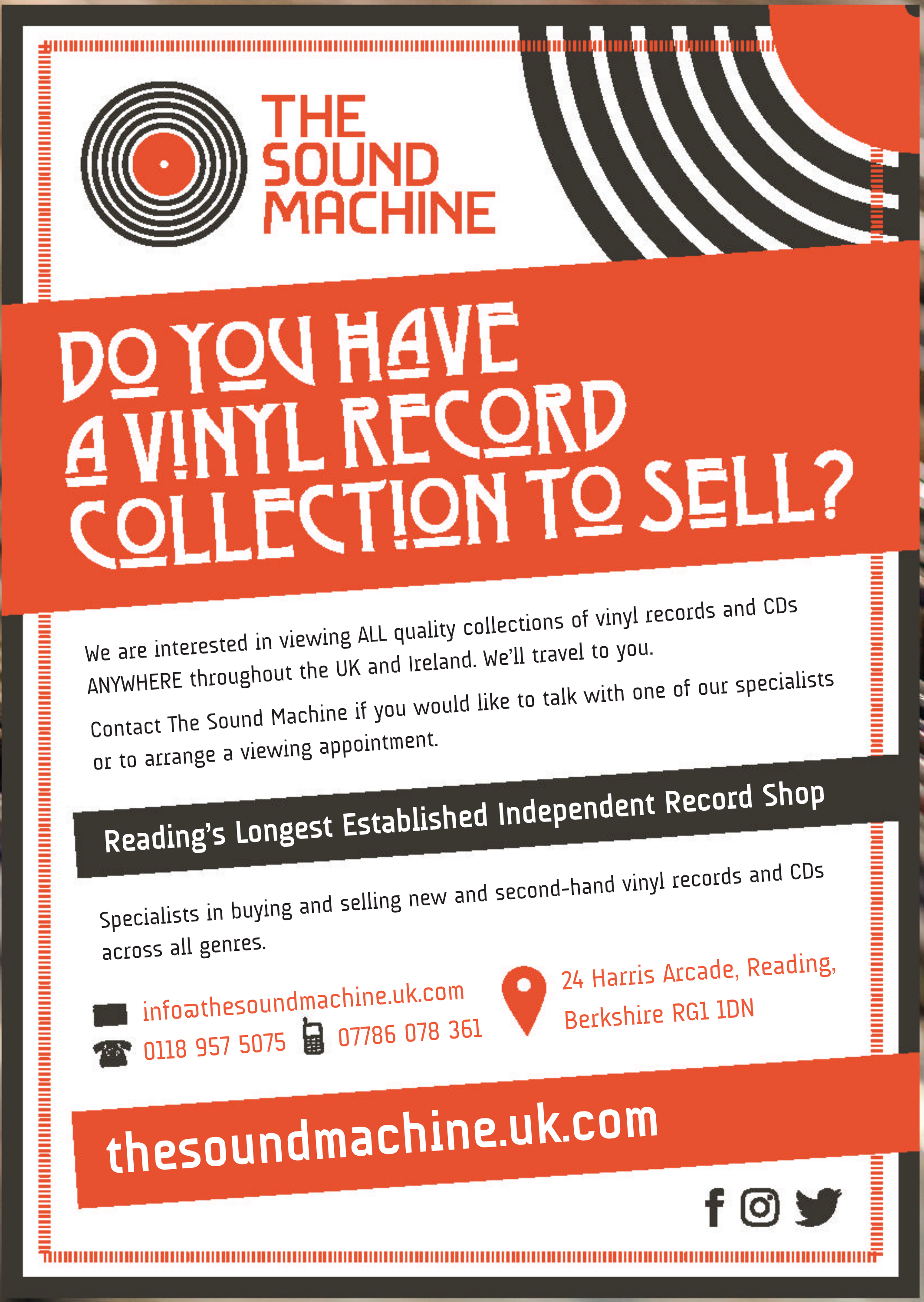
As told to Ian Harrison

Ivan Julian's Swing Your Lanterns is out now via Pravda Records.

"At low tide, our houseboat would tilt over 45 degrees."
IVAN JULIAN

The Voidoids (from left, Julian, Jerry Antonius, Quine, Hell) back Elvis Costello, CBGB, October 18, 1978; (left) Ivan today.

Getty (2), Sam Chen



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